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THE WAR
—
EVENTS AND INCIDENTS
—
BATTLE FIELDS

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THE WAR

OF

1870.

THE WAR

OF

1870.

EVENTS AND INCIDENTS OF THE
BATTLE-FIELDS.

BY

COUNT DE LA CHAPELLE,

FRENCH CORRESPONDENT OF THE "~~STANDARD~~" AT THE SEAT OF WAR.

LONDON :

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PREFACE.

IN the following pages will be found narrated the principal events of the campaign of 1870, from the day of the arrival of the Emperor at the head-quarters of the "Armée du Rhin" at Metz, up to the Battle of Orléans, on the 11th of October.

I am a Frenchman, and therefore I must beg my readers to excuse all incorrectness of style. Returned from a three months' campaign with the armies, I have hastily written this small work fresh from the battle-fields. I relate the events of the war simply as I have witnessed them, and almost without commentary.

My essay is an epitome of facts, in which I

endeavour to give a faithful and impartial outline of that gigantic contest, which is yet keeping the world in suspense as to its final results.

This is my excuse for intruding boldly into the ranks of English literature, hoping that my momentary appearance will not be too severely censured.

COMTE DE LA CHAPELLE.

LONDON :

November, 1870.

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THE WAR

OF 1870.

CHAPTER I.

EMPEROR'S ARRIVAL AT METZ — L'ARMÉE DU RHIN — FIRST
APPEARANCE OF THE UHLANS — THE ENGAGEMENT OF
SAAREBRUCK—ANECDOTES.

ON the 20th of July the Emperor and the Prince Imperial, accompanied by Prince Napoleon, arrived at Metz. From the railway station to the prefecture the streets were lined with crowds; the military and civilians attending the arrival of the sovereign.

The gendarmes, the cent-gardes, with their brilliant uniforms, the Zouaves, in their oriental dresses, were keeping the passage clear from the prefecture to the Porte Serpenoise and the railway station.

Regiments of different arms were camping on the grounds between the railway and the fortifications; the tents, the uniforms of the soldiers, the equipages of the commissariat, the villagers in their best attire, were completing a picturesque frame to the landscape.

A movement of the crowd, a sudden excitement of the masses, soon indicated that the Emperor had come, and that his majesty was about to enter the town, where he would establish for the present the head-quarters of the "Grande Armée du Rhin."

Hats were lifted, and hearty cheers of "Vive l'Empereur" were enthusiastically raised. A dozen of cent-gardes, superb in their uniforms of sky-blue tunics with scarlet lining, on their magnificent chargers, headed the procession at a walk, with drawn swords. After them came the outriders, with the imperial livery, and an equerry of the household; a barouche, drawn by four horses ridden by postillions, containing the Emperor, followed.

His Imperial Majesty was dressed in the uniform of a général de division, with the grand cordon de la légion d'honneur; his aide-de-camp, General Waubert de Genlis, and two other generals, were forming his suite. A gratified and contented smile spread over the countenance, always so impassible, of the Emperor.

A second carriage, open like the first, followed; it contained the Prince Imperial, his aide-de-camp, and his equerry. The young Prince was looking full of spirits, and was bowing gracefully amidst the cheers of the crowd.

Prince Napoleon and several dignitaries of the Empire closed the cortége, which made its way towards the palace of the prefecture, where apartments had been prepared.

Great was the animation in the city of Metz during the succeeding days. The streets were full of variegated uniforms—cavalry, infantry, artillery, general staff, and even mobiles; the hotels overflowing with customers of all kinds—officers, civil and military,

speculators, officials, journalists, and civilians of high rank.

The Hôtel de l'Europe and the Hôtel de Metz, had the exclusive honour to shelter under their roofs, the État-Major général de l'Armée du Rhin, the aides-de-camp of the Emperor, the Intendant-Général, and the principal representatives of the British press, conspicuous for their eagerness to observe.

The head-quarters of the "Armée du Rhin" were established at Metz. The proclamation of the Emperor had just been issued. The different corps d'armée were composed as follows :—

First corps d'armée, under Marshal MacMahon, 88,000 men, with powerful artillery, on the borders of the Lower Rhine, facing Rhenish Bavaria.

Second corps d'armée, General Frossard, 80,000 men, at St. Avold and Forbach.

Third corps d'armée, under Marshal Bazaine, 82,000 men, between Courcelles and Boulay.

Fourth corps d'armée, General Ladmirault, 29,000 men, at Boulay.

Fifth corps d'armée, General de Failly, at Saareguemines, 26,000 men.

Sixth corps d'armée, Marshal Canrobert, 28,000 men, at the Camp of Châlons.

Seventh corps d'armée, General Félix Douay, 33,000 men, at Belfort.

The corps of the Garde Impériale, 30,000 men strong, and commanded by General Bourbaki, were encamped at the Polygone of Metz (Ile Chambrière).

That Grande Armée, as it was emphatically called at Metz, was 241,000 men strong, well-equipped, well-armed. The excellent spirits and health of the troops, the amplitude of the arrangements, the magnitude of the artillery material brought together at so short a notice, the over-confidence of the chief commanders and their officers, put in everybody's mind the certainty, to witness the most gigantic contest known in modern history.

The Emperor, as commander-in-chief, had appointed Marshal Lebœuf major-general of the army. The late Minister of War was the man of the situation; his

popularity was great, and his abilities had not been contested.

General Soleille was commander-in-chief of the artillery; General de St. Sauveur, prévôt-général of the army.

The general staff was composed of those brilliant and special officers, who at all times have distinguished themselves by their knowledge, their military science, and their great aptitude.

Amongst them, Colonel Lewal, Colonel Fay, Colonel de Kleinenberg, Colonel de l'Espée, and many other officers of the French État-Major. Unfortunately those officers were left without initiative in secondary positions, when they were, with few exceptions, the only officers who had made serious studies on strategy and tactics, and who had acquired by experience the practical military science, studied theoretically all their lives. But the military hierarchy in France does not allow an officer of merit to command his superior in rank; and l'État-Major Français—those learned pupils of the Polytechnic Schools—were

compelled, at the beginning of the campaign, to trace out patiently the absurd plans conceived by a major-general without brains, or a spark of inventive talent.

We shall soon see how unfortunate France, under a misguided sovereign, has had to pay for the incapacity of one man—for his guilty ignorance.

The enthusiasm of the French population was at its zenith; never had a war been so popular; and the Ruler of the State could not, without danger of his Crown, have stopped the warlike spirit of the nation. Over-confidence, which has proved so fatal since the reverses, was so extreme, so exaggerated, that an impartial observer could not help shuddering in foreseeing the consequences of a deception that might arise.

The superior manœuvres, the attacks *à la bayonette*, the irresistible élan of the French soldiers, the mysterious mitrailleuses, were so many arguments prevalent not only amongst the people, the soldiers, but with the officers, in favour of a prompt and decisive success against the Prussian armies—alas! so under-estimated.

It was even painful, at times, to hear the contempt thrown by intelligent officers over their enemy's forces or organisation.

The opinion of the French was shared by many other nations; and in England the chances of war were generally understood to be in favour of France, although many thought that the shock and élan of the French columns would be crushed by the imposing masses and well-drilled troops of the Germans.

In Lorraine and Alsace, from Nancy to Metz, to Strasburg, on the line to Haguenau, Niederbronn, Saareguemines, the Emperor was daily inspecting the encampments, and was received on all the roads with unbounded enthusiasm, the cheers of "Vive l'Empereur" being intermixed with the national songs of "La Marseillaise" and "Partant pour la Syrie." Even in the manufacturing towns, workmen, women and children, were leaving their factories to greet the Imperial train and the passing convoys of soldiers—boys and young women approaching the carriages with

baskets on their arms, full of provisions, wines, fruits, and flowers, that they were liberally distributing to their heroes.

All along the frontiers, shots were daily exchanged between reconnoitring parties of the French and the enemy; several buildings had been turned into hospitals in prevision for the worst; and numbers of waggons were carrying at full steam stocks of supplies to the front.

The Prussian cavalry—the Uhlans—had meanwhile commenced their dashing raids across the French frontier, and had established at once their fame as daring “*éclaireurs*,” putting aside all tradition of using cavalry in large numbers, or of wasting time in skirmishing encounters, they were reconnoitring on all points—their number varying from fifty to twenty, and sometimes less. They explored French territory with impunity; they had already advanced to Weissebourg and Hagueneau, their appearance causing a regular panic.

In their fatal self-confidence, the French commanders were in the meantime basking in the shades

of the cafés at the city of Metz. After a few hurried sentences on the war, and the glorious conquests in perspective, after the important discussion of the evening dinner, mixed with the intrigues of the Emperor's entourage, the question of precedence and of eager ambition, were subjects far more *à l'ordre du jour* than the advance of the Prussians, or of their éclaireurs, which was considered a trifling matter in comparison with the comfort, present and future, of those gentlemen.

Some of the generals were followed by the whole of their family, wives, daughters, babies, and nurses. Some others were conspicuous by the luxury and importance of their equipage. Their names, and the explanations on their acting capacity in the Armée du Rhin, were written in immense letters on their convoys, so that any impresario would have envied the brilliancy of those elaborated sign-boards.

A few days later, when the old veteran, General Changarnier, arrived at Metz, the first words uttered by the hero of Africa censured briefly the mis-

takes of the generals of the Second Empire ; *ce n'est pas comme cela qu'on fait la guerre*, said the General, when in the middle of those unnecessary trains.

The Emperor, since assuming the chief command of the army, had given an example of earnestness which cannot be denied. Every day his Majesty was holding long conferences with the generals, or visiting the camps without escort or pompous equipage. He was to be seen everywhere on the French military lines, and whatever may be the censure to pass on his succeeding actions, it is a duty to assert that from the commencement of the war he put aside the usual luxury of his habits, and went to work with energy.

Movements of troops had taken place for two days previously, and on the 2nd of August the second corps d'armée, commanded by General Frossard, had advanced to Spicheren towards Saarebruck. Early in the morning the Emperor and the Prince Imperial had started for Forbach, and an engagement took place near Saarebruck.

General Frossard had taken a strong position on

sion, to test the Prussian forces, had filled the principal object. Saarebruck is an open town of nine thousand inhabitants; the river Saare runs through the city; at a distance of seven miles from Forbach the town is accessible from the French frontier by that bridge where the engagement began in the morning.

In the evening the Emperor returned to Metz, where he met with an ovation from the inhabitants. The Prince Imperial, after his return from the combat, made a faithful sketch of the engagement; the march of the divisions, the encounter, the bridge, the spot where he stood with the Emperor during the affair, although roughly sketched with the pen, were full of life and correctness. In one corner of the sketch, the young prince had written these two lines:—

“À mon ami, Tristan Lambert, le 2 Août, après avoir vu le feu pour la première fois.

“LOUIS NAPOLEON.”

Much stress, leading even to exaggeration, was put by the French on that victory at the opening of the campaign; but since, great disasters have fallen on their country. They have bitterly regretted their first enthusiasm, and even blamed the operation as an unnecessary sham. On another side, the Prussians have affirmed that that easy victory was won by an overwhelming force against one of their single divisions. Both are erroneous and unjust in their assertions. Numerically speaking, in the actual engagement, a force of 10,000 Prussians fought against 7,000 French, and the troops engaged were equally sustained by their respective corps d'armée, close at hand—the corps of Steinmetz at the north, and close to Saarebruck, the corps of Frossard at Spicheren. If the Prussians had chosen, the engagement would have ended in a great battle.

CHAPTER II.

THE PRUSSIAN ARMIES—THE COMBAT OF WEISSENBURG—
THE BATTLE OF WOERTH—THE BATTLE OF FORBACH—
INCIDENTS.

At the beginning of the campaign the Prussian army was divided into twelve corps. The first (East Prussian Army Corps) was commanded by General Manteuffel; the second (Pomeranian) by General Fromeschi; the third (Brandenburger) by Von Alvensleben II.; the fourth (Prussian Saxony) by Von Alvensleben I.; the fifth (Posen) by Von Kirchback; the sixth (Silesian) by Von Tumplinz; the seventh (Westphalian) by Von Zartrow; the eighth (Rhineland) by Goeben; the ninth (Schleswig-Holstein) by Momstein; the tenth (Hanoverian) by Von Voigts Rhetz; the eleventh (Hesse and Nassau) by Von Böse; the twelfth (Saxony) by the Crown

Prince of Saxony. The Guards were under the command of Prince Augustus of Wurtemberg. These twelve corps, to which must be added the armies of Bavaria, Wurtemberg, and Baden, were divided into four armies, forming an effective force of 510,000 men.

The army of the north, protecting the Prussian territory against a French invasion from the Baltic, was under the command of General Vogel Von Falckenstein.

The army of the right wing, commanded by Prince Frederick Charles, had its head-quarters at Trèves.

The army of the centre, commanded by General Steinmetz, had advanced in the valley of the Saare.

The army of the left wing, commanded by the Crown Prince, had crossed into the Palatinate, with three Prussian corps and the Bavarians.

The King of Prussia had retained the command in chief of all the armies, and General Von Moltke, the great strategist, the real commander-in-chief, was the major-general of the armies.

The Prussian armies were far superior in all respects to the French; the military science of the com-

manders, the sound knowledge of the officers, the discipline and good organisation of the troops, their number, their artillery, have proved hitherto unequalled: it is without disguise the ascending military power of our century. Audacity, patience, ability, qualities indispensable to a rising people, have been stamped on all their conquests, from Albert de Brandenburg to the present king. From the times of the little margravate to the powerful Prussian kingdom of our days their successes have been systematically followed; and now that the European equilibrium is becoming a thing of the past, Europe may find, too late perhaps, that the descendants of the little margravate have been inflicting a violent blow on its future freedom and independence. All the Teutonic princes have been animated by the same spirit of ambition, and, pursuing their idea, they have at all times paid with their own persons a large tribute to the dangers attending their conquests.

In the actual war, from the nearest relative of the monarch to the pettiest ruler of a minor German state,

members of the families are to be found, taking an active part in the campaign, either as commanders or subaltern officers.

The present writer now wishes it to be distinctly understood that he was the French correspondent of the *Standard*, with the French armies, and that having obtained from the beginning of the campaign a permission to follow the movements, he has been an eye-witness to the principal events he is going to relate, impartiality and truthfulness being his principal object.

Giving a brief account of the combat of Weissembourg and the battle of Woerth, I shall pass to the narrative of the battle of Forbach, at which I was present the greatest part of the day.

On the 4th of August a portion of the advanced guard of Marshal MacMahon was attacked at Weissembourg by a strong Prussian force; three brigades of General Douay's division and a brigade of light cavalry had received orders, to maintain the enemy, and to oppose by all means his advance on French

territory. Weissembourg is a little town of 6000 inhabitants. Situated on the Lauter, on the borders of the French frontier, it is one of the stations on the railway line between Strasburg and Manheim, and the object of MacMahon in sending for brigades to defend that road was principally to mask the movements of his corps d'armée, when effecting a countermarch, to the enemy.

Between twelve and one o'clock two regiments of chasseurs, two of the line, a battalion of Turcos, a regiment of Zouaves, and a brigade of light cavalry, all under the command of General Abel Douay, advanced from Weissembourg, crossed the Lauter, and took position on the hills above the flats of Geisburg; the 5th and 11th corps d'armée of the Prussians, commanded by Generals Von Kirchback and Von Böse, advancing from Bergzabern, on the Landau road, attacked the French outposts. The contest became soon obstinate; for several hours the French fought with extreme and desperate bravery, the Zouaves and Turcos emulating one another in their

heroic exploits. Every spot was defended with obstinacy by the Prussians, who in overwhelming numbers were winning ground; at that moment the Crown Prince, moving the second Bavarian corps d'armée by the Lamb-Weissembourg road, crossed over Geisburg, and fell upon the rear of the French, taking them between two fires, and capturing 500 prisoners, the tents, and stores of the encampment. Notwithstanding their critical position, the French continued to fight with great gallantry, and after resisting for several hours, they contrived to retire on the Cöl du Pigeonnier, adjoining the road to Bitsche. General Abel Douay was killed in this action, and the engagement can be considered creditable to French valour, although a defeat. The French losses were great; nearly 2,000 soldiers and officers were killed or put hors de combat; and MacMahon, on hearing the result, was obliged to concentrate his troops, and change his plans, destroyed at once by the brilliant strategy of the Crown Prince of Prussia.

Pursuing his victory over General Douay's division,

the Crown Prince pushed at once in the direction of the valley of Niederbronn with the whole of his army, 120,000 men strong. He attacked the next day the forces commanded by Marshal MacMahon, an effective army of 88,000 men, with a powerful artillery: those troops were composed of the élite of the army of Africa. The engagement, which commenced at Freischwiller and Woerth, a little town between Saultz-sans-Forêts and Niederbronn, finished at Reischaffen, near Hagueneau, by a most complete defeat of the French.

The battle took place on Saturday, the 6th of August. The greatest centre of resistance was on the plateau of Woerth, where Marshal MacMahon had established a strong position. The Prussians, protected by the woods of Hagueneau, were attacking repeatedly under the protection of their formidable artillery. In vain the mitrailleuses were making a fearful havoc in the ranks of their columns. For every regiment decimated by the skilful aiming of the French artillerymen, a new one was emerging from the woods; and turning all obstacles into good account, availing

themselves of rising or low ground, the German soldiers were advancing as in a parade, or as if they were moved by secret springs. The contest was terrible, the Prussian artillery making a fearful carnage in the French ranks. Turcos, Zouaves, troops of the line, were fighting heroically, four against one ; repeated charges of cavalry, cuirassiers, and chasseurs were brilliantly executed ; but the cavalry had to retire each time before the superior artillery, after experiencing serious losses. In one of those charges the 1st regiment of cuirassiers, when encountering a Prussian column, was nearly destroyed by a battery masked by the battalions. The colonel of this regiment had his head cut off by a cannon-ball, and, horrible to relate, his beheaded corpse, sitting yet straight on his horse, was carried over a course of 200 yards before it fell to the ground.

In the middle of the conflict, a battalion of Turcos, headed by its commander, succeeded, with an irresistible impetuosity, in cutting through the Prussian columns, and when their heroic work was done, they

found themselves isolated, and soon enveloped by their enemies, who made them prisoners of war.

“Then we have not been followed by the others!” exclaimed with astonishment the brave commander, who had thought of penetrating into the Prussian battalions with the whole of the French army.

The struggle had lasted all day, the bugles were sounding the retreat, and the débris of MacMahon’s corps d’armée were disputing foot by foot the glorious ground covered with French corpses. Some of those brave soldiers would not retire, and isolated fighting continued till late in the night.

The defeat of the French was irreparable. 13,000 men were killed or put hors de combat. In the morning, when MacMahon, who had remained all night on the heights of Phalsburg, tried to count his losses, and to rally the remains of his unfortunate divisions, the great heart of the brave marshal failed at the task. Overcome by emotion, tears were seen flowing from his eyes, and in a gesture of despair his head bowed under the weight of his disasters.

All the war material, the tents, the provisions, the stores, all the officers' luggage, and even the military chest of the marshal, fell as prey to the enemy.

Soldiers of all arms were arriving by small groups, and on the plateau of Phalsburg the remains of the gallant corps d'armée were assembling in confusion. It was a heterogeneous mass of the débris that only remained of the noble troops; chasseurs, Zouaves, infantry, hussars, cuirassiers, mixed together, and looking out anxiously in all directions, with the hope of finding some friend or dear comrade escaped from the scene of carnage.

The losses of the Prussians were enormous, and have been estimated at 16,000 men killed and 10,000 wounded.

Events were succeeding each other with such rapidity, misfortunes added to misfortunes, MacMahon defeated at Woerth, and in same time General Frossard was repulsed from Saarbruck, and pursued by General Steinmetz as far as St. Avold.

Knowing that an important engagement was going

on in the direction of Spicheren, I left Metz on horse-back on the morning of the 7th of August, and having left my horse a short distance from St. Avold, I got leave to jump on a locomotive leaving for Forbach, and I arrived on the battle-field at 4 o'clock, P.M., at the moment when the Prussians, mastering the position of Spicheren, were menacing Forbach.

It is not an easy task to relate in a few words the fearful spectacle I witnessed ; but I must be brief and hasten to arrive at the *great épopée* of the war, which began at Borny and finished at Sedan.

Since 10 o'clock in the morning the army of General von Steinmetz, 70,000 men strong, retaking the positions occupied by the French at Saarebruck, had advanced to Spicheren, and had attacked vigorously the corps d'armée of General Frossard. The three divisions of infantry of the general were commanded by Generals Bataille, Verger, Laveaucoupet ; the division of cavalry by General Michel ; the artillery, under the command of General Gagneur, was composed of six batteries and several mitrailleuses.

The fight lasted all day ; and in the different movements of the battle the probable result of the day was doubtful till about 5 o'clock, P.M. ; and in the middle of the day the French had the greatest confidence of being victorious. General Frossard, with inconceivable carelessness, had left the battle-field, after giving a few orders, and treating the affair as a mere engagement without importance. He quietly remained several hours in the house of his friend, the mayor of Forbach, enjoying a luxurious lunch, and discussing with that worthy magistrate the magnitude of his arrangements ; and in the meantime new German columns had arrived on the battle-field. The French soldiers, headed by the brave General Bataille, had to sustain the tremendous shock of an enemy increasing continually in number. Message on message was sent to the general-in-chief, but he did not proceed any quicker ; and instead of a new combination, a movement of retreat which might have saved the day, the French divisions were left without new order, and had to succumb by degrees under the tremendous shock of

70,000 Prussians. Their courage and devotion worthy of Spartans, their élan, their attack to the bayonet, the successful fire of the mitrailleuses, the brilliant charges of cavalry, could not prevent the progress forward of those immense masses, advancing steadily against the heavy firing of the French, and marking the road by traces of their blood. Later in the evening the conflict was concentrated around the town of Forbach, and its intensity was at the extreme; regiments were disappearing on both sides in the middle of the smoke, and when a glimpse could be got, half of the soldiers had fallen bravely.

I was in the company of Monsieur de Katow, a French journalist, standing close to the suburbs of Forbach, when I witnessed one of the most brilliant charges of cavalry imaginable; I thought of the celebrated charge of Balaclava, and, paralysed with emotion, I followed the daring cut through the Prussian columns, of the 7th regiment of dragoons, headed by the Duke of Elchingen, the grandson of Marshal Ney, and of two other regiments of hussars, following like

a torrent. Feats of bravery, actions d'éclats, we counted by hundreds, but that sublime heroism was of no avail; the charges of cavalry were repulsed by the powerful artillery fire of the enemy, and the well-sustained aiming of the needle-guns was driving the French regiments from the last positions they were yet defending, in despair. The fight was now in the streets; it was eight o'clock; the Prussians were completely victorious, and the remains of Frossard's corps d'armée were in full retreat towards the road to St. Avold: their general-in-chief had disappeared in the confusion, and Forbach was on fire. The scenes of despair were disheartening, the inhabitants of the town flying in wild terror, not only before the destructive element, but also before the shower of bullets, increasing with the retreat of the soldiers and the advance of the enemy. In the middle of the struggle I had lost my friend, and it was with admiration that I saw him, a few minutes later, emerging from a house on fire, with two children under his arms, whom he had saved from a certain death, and was now restoring

to their frenzied mother. Paul de Katow, my courageous friend, was slightly wounded. On my congratulations on his heroic deed, he answered as if he was unconscious of his gallant conduct.

Over the dead bodies, and through the fighting masses and flying population, we were lucky enough to win the railway station at the very moment when an engine, already crammed with people, was starting. A jump on the locomotive, and a few hours later we were passing St. Avold at full steam; and at one o'clock in the morning we were in the station at Metz.

The Emperor and his staff were in the station, ready to start for the battle-fields, to be present at the affair; but the sad news of the complete defeat of Frossard, brought by a messenger on an engine, altered the Emperor's course, and his Majesty was seen starting in great haste for the préfecture. Consternation was plainly visible in his countenance.

Of the 30,000 men of General Frossard, 10,000 had been killed, wounded, or made prisoners. The Germans

acknowledged heavy losses—17,000 men were hors de combat,—but the victorious columns of Steinmetz, indefatigable in their ardour, intoxicated by their success, pursued their immense advantage during the night, and in the morning they were already occupying St. Avold, and mastering the line of railway to Metz.

How shall I describe the effect produced at Metz by the news of the fatal blows just inflicted on two of the principal corps d'armée? The defeat of MacMahon, the rout of Frossard, were the disasters announced in the morning to the civil and military population of Metz. The magnitude of the shock was unanimously understood, and the Imperial despatches, dictated by a spirit of despair, were far from creating confidence in the future. An immediate appeal to the nation, sent hurriedly on the electric wires, spread an unnecessary terror amongst the French people—so easily discouraged—when reassurance was wanted, and when the nation had the greatest thirst for hope in the future, the

Imperial Government, by a direct appeal to the nation, gave a decisive blow to its power—to the prestige of eighteen years of a glorious reign.

It was a sad mistake of the Emperor or his advisers, instead of decreeing measures implying weakness on their part, or of making at once an appeal to the nation, they ought to have concentrated in themselves all their energy, all their abilities. Napoleon III. ought to have remembered the daring of his early years, and, instead of morally sinking under such unexpected disasters, he ought to have faced his position in a cooler vein, and taken at once the energetic measures he decided on three days later. The appeal to the nation at such an ill-timed moment had only one effect: to discourage a great people, to destroy all confidence in its strength, and fill its mind with the idea that things were far worse than officially given out.

Even the officers of rank considered, and acknowledged that all was lost for France; and "*Tout est perdu*" was the motto which within three days

had replaced the outrageous boasting of a military promenade to Berlin.

The Germanic Empire is made, was the sentence repeated everywhere; and whatever victories the French may win yet, they will not now shake the Prussian influence and prestige. Such was the most prevailing opinion, and I must say I was sharing it largely.

But I must repeat, it was not an excuse for the Government of France for discouraging the nation so suddenly, after having fed her for so many years with a false idea of her military strength and grandeur; and for throwing at once that immense gloom all over a people who, for resistance, wanted only encouragement, and to be inspired with a strong faith in a future revenge.

CHAPTER III.

AT METZ—THE NEW COMMANDER-IN-CHIEF—INTRIGUES—THE
BATTLE OF BORNŸ—THE EMPEROR'S STAFF—A BRAVE COR-
RESPONDENT AT LONGEVILLE—BATTLES OF GRAVELOTTÉ AND
MARS-LA-TOUR.

ON that ill-omened Sunday of the seventh of August, when the crushing news of the defeats had circulated around the city of Metz, a sudden panic seized the inhabitants; the natural exaggeration so inherent to French minds, had already created imaginary dangers; and numbers of people were already seeing the Prussians at the very gates of Metz; all the carriages and vehicles were chartered to convey the alarmists and their families far from the siege of war; the Emperor himself was preparing for departure, and it was asserted that the Quartier Impérial and the État-major of the Armée du Rhin would be

immediately transferred to some other city in the interior.

It was with a feeling of sadness that, later in the day, I saw the equipages of the Emperor and some officers of his staff, leaving Metz in a hurry, the picture of a sad calamity; but at the same time a happy contrast came to relieve my mind, a large assembly of the citizens of Metz had been congregating in the court of the Hôtel de Metz, and swearing to put aside all causes of political antagonism, and to join fraternally in the defence of their city.

Amongst the lower classes the excitement had reached almost to madness, bands of men were parading the streets, asking for revenge, and stopping any looker-on who had a foreign appearance. Several English and American correspondents were badly handled by the mob, and the authorities were compelled to put them under arrest, as being the only means to protect them from the infuriated people who fancied they saw in those honourable gentlemen a lot of Prussian spies.

After the battle of Woerth, the Crown Prince, owing to the serious losses experienced in his victory, did not advance at once forward; on the Monday night, his head-quarters were at Soultz, east of Woerth; the King had advanced to Hombourg, fifteen miles from the French frontier; Steinmetz had his head-quarters a little to the north of Saarbruck; Prince Frederick Charles was at Bielcastel, ten miles due east from Saarbruck; Forbach was occupied by the vanguard of the army of the right wing, and the army of the centre had crossed the Saar and occupied Saarreguemines.

From the French side, MacMahon had retreated on Saverne, and was making for Nancy; De Failly was directing his troops for his junction with MacMahon; Douay was staying at Belfort; and Canrobert had arrived at Metz from Châlons with two divisions of his corps.

Around Metz, the corps of Bazaine, Ladmirault, Frossard, and the Imperial Guard, with Bourbaki, were concentrated, pending the changes which were

taking place in the chief command of the Armée du Rhin.

Public opinion had been rising against the incapacity of Marshal Leboeuf, who was looked on as the principal cause of the first reverses ; the general was removed from his position ; the Emperor himself gave up the chief command of the Armée du Rhin, and the great question to solve, was the appointment of a general, popular enough to inspire confidence, and who would not hesitate in taking such a serious responsibility. Changarnier, the old and popular general of Africa, had arrived at Metz ; he came, in the moment of danger, to offer his sword to the monarch, who had signed his imprisonment in 1848, and who sent him into exile ; he brought the services of his rare experience to the *patrie en danger*. The old general was handsomely received by the Emperor, and from that moment the veteran took the greatest part in the council of war, and exercised a benevolent influence over its decisions.

At a meeting of the chefs-de-corps, of the marshals

of France, and of the general staffs, the important discussion for the choice of a new général-en-chef was on the order of the day ; the Emperor was presiding, and after a few sensible remarks on the reasons inducing him to give up the command, he recommended to his lieutenants to consider the importance of their resolution, and he exhorted them to put aside all feeling of ambition, in presence of the grave events which had occurred, and of the great task they had to fulfil ; for himself, he was determined not to influence in the least their decision ; and after those few sentences, the Emperor buried silently his face in his hands, and waited, without adding a word, for the nomination of his successor to the Armée du Rhin.

The meeting was a stormy one, the favourites of the court, the generals *de salon* of the second empire, those egoistical men, who, taking advantage of the noted kindness and favour of their sovereign, had helped to plunge him in misfortunes without parallel, could not entertain the idea to give up their projects of ambition,

and to be commanded by a general designed at once by his rank, his qualities, and the prestige of his glorious campaigns. But Changarnier's resistance overcame the petty intrigues, and Marshal Bazaine, the illustrious soldier from the ranks, was appointed to the supreme command of the Armée du Rhin, in conjunction with MacMahon, who was to take the command-in-chief of his own corps, also of the corps De Failly, Félix Douay, and of the new columns in formation at Châlons.

I will not discuss the strategical errors of the beginning of the campaign, but the plan of Marshal Lebœuf, or of the Emperor, was certainly in defiance of all the rules of strategy, followed by the great generals in modern warfare; the great captain, the founder of the imperial dynasty, instead of scattering his forces over a long line of country, concentrated them in heavy masses, and the wonders executed in his campaigns ought to have been a sufficient reason to follow the example of the greatest military genius of modern times. De Failly, put in a position where

he could not rejoin MacMahon, attacked by the Crown Prince, is one of those blunders which history will censure, as an enormity against the elementary rules of military operations ; Frossard, left to himself at Forbach, will be a second example of the negligence or incapacity of the advisers of the first commander-in-chief of the Armée du Rhin.

In assuming the command, Marshal Bazaine, in a bulletin to the army, explained briefly the efficient measures he intended to take, and that, putting aside the system followed by his predecessor, he would act at once energetically.

France was getting rid of the traditions of the Empire, which had lately given everything by favour, merit being only a secondary question ; the warriors of the Imperial ante-chamber were disappearing to the second or to a subaltern rank, and great effects were expected from a new and salutary change.

Bazaine, the new commander-in-chief, ordered everybody to take the field, to camp in their respective quarters ; and after many counter-marches towards

Boulay, St. Avold, and all along the frontier, the Armée du Rhin was on the 13th of August occupying encampments nearly on the ground protected by the detached forts around Metz; and the effective forces of the 2nd, 3rd, and 4th corps, the whole of the Garde Impériale, and the two divisions of Canrobert, composed an army of 138,000 men, the élite of the French army, under the absolute command of Marshal Bazaine.

From good information I had heard that the Emperor and his staff would leave Metz on the 14th of August, and that the whole of the army would retreat on Verdun. Owing to this information I left on the Sunday morning for the camp of the Garde Impériale; and it is to that circumstance that I am indebted for the opportunity of being present at the battle of Borny: but I shall not anticipate; my tale will be brief. I found myself accidentally in the middle of the fire, and my narrative is given *de visu*.

At 1 o'clock on Saturday afternoon, the 14th of August, Bazaine ordered the movement of retreat of

a heavy fire of artillery was soon heard in every direction, and the Prussian Landwehr, heading the German column, advanced rapidly to the attack. The cannons and mitrailleuses began their deadly work on each side. I was standing close to a fourgon of ammunition; all soon became confusion; men falling around me, bullets whizzing past my ears, and plunging into the midst of the battalions. It is awful to be cool and inactive in the middle of such a bloody holocaust; the cries of the wounded, the imprecations of the falling soldiers, the rage of their friends, their thirst for revenge, all seemed fantastic and demoniacal as in a bad dream; but no, it was not a nightmare; some of my friends, amongst them the Baron de Vatry, commanding one of the battalions of the Garde, passed me, and reminded me of the danger I was incurring without reason; but their words sounded as a murmur only in the roars of the contest. They soon disappeared in the smoke; and I continued to look at the scene of carnage before me with a strong feeling of uncertainty of returning to tell my sad tale.

A battery of artillery with a mitrailleuse made a fearful havoc in the Prussian ranks. I heard frantic bravos announcing its new exploits, the aiming was so well directed, the precision so great, that each fire was positively mowing down the Prussian ranks. Their columns fought desperately, their artillery replying to the other with great effect, and destroying French batallions right and left.

At 7 o'clock P.M. the Prussians were making a movement of retreat. A mitrailleuse had been twice taken from the French, and although it is only one of the hundreds of incidents of the battle, I mention it as it led to an important result. For the last hour one of the greatest efforts of the French had had for object to dislodge the Prussians from the woods of Borny, their troops being protected by that natural rampart. The brave colonel of the 44th Infantry, 2nd division, in retaking the mitrailleuse, was the cause of an immense body of Prussians emerging suddenly from the woods, and precipitating themselves as an infuriated torrent on the French divisions; it

was only a pretext, for it was expected that the Prussians would follow the same tactics as at Forbach and Woerth, which consists in keeping out of sight their masses, their best divisions, and when the result of the battle seems to be in favour of their opponent, to change defeat into victory by that powerful movement of immense bodies of troops plunging suddenly on the enemy; but this time Marshal Bazaine had prepared a match for them. The Imperial Guard, commanded by Bourbaki, had been kept in reserve; their artillery, from a strong position, began the defensive, the Grenadiers advanced, and from that moment till a quarter to nine you might have thought you were in the middle of the irruption of Mount Vesuvius; Fort de Queuleu sweeping with its powerful batteries the flank of the advancing columns, regiments of cavalry charging on the wings; at a quarter to nine precisely the Prussians were retreating, leaving from 23,000 to 24,000 men *hors de combat*. The French had lost 8000 men killed, or *hors de combat*.

One hundred thousand Prussians actually took part in the battle against 60,000 Frenchmen: the great disproportion existing between the losses of both, had for cause a false movement of the Prussians, which brought them when retreating under the full fire of the Fort de Queuleu.

General Decaen was wounded in the leg, General de Castagny had one arm cut, and Marshal Bazaine himself received a slight contusion on the head.

The Emperor, who during the fight had been at the village of Longeville, on the road to Verdun, and at three miles distance, visited the battle-field in the evening; and I must say I never saw a more lugubrious sight in my life,—under the Fort de Queuleu, some heaps of Prussian corpses a yard and a-half high, their mournful shadows reflecting in the moonlight. Marching with the Imperial Guard, I took the road to Verdun, and encamped at Moulines, where I arrived at about 1 o'clock A.M.

It was a curious sight at the little village of Moulines-les-Metz, five miles from Metz. On the night

and morning of the 15th of August, all the French army was passing or camping around the village; hotels, private houses, barns, were occupied by the officers, the roads were so thickly crowded with troops, waggons, horses, artillery, that to advance for half a mile was an affair of more than one hour. From the top of a *diligence*, where I vainly tried to sleep, I witnessed the most ludicrous scenes amongst the soldiers,—a dragoon driving a miserable cow he had caught in the neighbourhood, and fighting over his booty with a foot soldier pretending to share in the speculation. “That cow is (*mon avenir*) my fortune,” repeated the half-drunken dragoon, while thrashing his friend, and at last they agreed to share the profit when realised. Then a Zouave parading with the most astounding trophy I ever saw, four geese majestically balancing on his shoulders, and around his body a regular belt of poultry of all sort; it was an ambulant poulterer provided at cheap cost in one of the court-yards of the neighbourhood. Many of these soldiers had been engaged in the

battle of the day, and after their exploits they had sought the comforts of a good meal at the expense of the farmers who had abandoned their homes before the cannonade.

Generals, officers of staffs, were defiling amongst the crowd, and at daylight Marshal Canrobert, in the middle of his officers, and headed by his *porte-fanion*, was inspecting the different encampments and convoys, and suddenly retraced his steps towards Longeville. It had been ascertained that some Prussian divisions were surrounding the neighbourhood, menacing the Quartier Impérial, and one hour later some shells were thrown in the court-yard of the house occupied by the Emperor; a colonel and few men were killed, and a skirmishing fire began on all the hills surrounding.

I had lost my horse, and I was in search of a new conveyance, when I met two gentlemen—one the correspondent of *Paris-Journal*, the other from the Brussels *Etoile Belge*. They were leaving Metz for fear of the blockade, and we agreed to make for

Verdun, in order to be able to send our correspondence. A diligence from Boulay, obliged to leave its quarters by the Prussian invasion, was staying in the village. After many *pourparlers* we desired the conductor to take us at once to Verdun. Money was no object to us, and the high price which we agreed to pay was the only argument in deciding him. We started at 8 o'clock from Moulins, but the road being entirely encumbered by the troops and army transports, we had to follow them, and were about two hours reaching Maison-neuve, which is only three kilometres (two miles).

We were now at Maison-neuve, on the 15th, at 10 o'clock—the village was full of troops, a regiment posted *en tirailleur* on the summit of the hill, chasseurs and hussars exploring the country. We were just taking some coffee when the report of cannon was heard in the direction of Metz. A regular scampering away took place; the equipages of the Emperor were ascending a parallel road in the direction of Verdun. A French reporter, who had just joined us, was so

panic-struck that he jumped on one of the army waggons and disappeared from our eyes. We tried to put our diligence amongst the ranks of waggons, but the gendarmes would not allow it; my companions proposed to abandon our vehicle, but I declared that I would stick to it; and going to the gendarme I stated that I had obtained from their commander a special permission to follow with my diligence. In their hurry they believed my hazardous assertion, and we joined the convoy. I admit that every one was looking rather queer, the cannonade was continuing—it lasted about one hour and a half.

We were defiling on a lower road; on our right, on the summit of the hills, the Uhlans and Prussian tirailleurs were answering, by a well-sustained fire, to the French skirmishers posted on our left; the bullets were naturally passing over our heads, and now and then killing or wounding some of the soldiers advancing by our road. We were travelling under the two fires of the skirmishers, and amongst the panic-stricken fugitives. Some of those brilliant officers

of the Emperor's staff, in their sparkling uniforms, played, I am sorry to say, a shameful part in that affair. I saw some of them galloping at full speed, and then stopping with terror to inquire from us if we had seen the Emperor—if we knew where he was; admitting, by their very inquiries, that they had fled from their post, and abandoned their Emperor in the moment of danger. To one of them I pointed the road followed by the Emperor's equipage, but he did not seem to understand anything; he resumed his furious galloping towards the fields.

In a gutter close to the road, a man was lying motionless, a white pocket-handkerchief at the top of a stick planted on his side, was probably indicating to the passers-by that a new victim had fallen, and that a friendly hand had erected that flag of truce for the protection of the remains of the unfortunate man. I approached with an officer of gendarmerie, and how great was my astonishment when in the victim I recognised our companion of a few hours before, the French reporter of the *Soir*, perfectly alive and sound,

who had imagined in his terror that new way to protect his valuable person.

Notwithstanding the solemnity of the moment, we really did enjoy our friend's position, and for the rest of the day the adventures of our brave French reporter made the principal gossip of our voyage.

I might have been generous enough to remain silent on the bravery of that gentleman, but having managed to escape and to reach Paris, he wrote a brilliant article in the *Journal le Soir* passing the greatest encomiums on his deeds of gallantry under fire, and emphatically detailing how he raised his cap to the first bullets whirling around his head. *C'est ainsi qu'on écrit l'histoire.*

Our diligence, with its three horses, was slowly but surely following the military convoy, the Prussian skirmishers had abandoned the summit of the hills, and the fire had ceased; we were surrounded by officers and soldiers who had not had any meals for the last twenty-four hours; we liberally shared the wines and provisions we had gathered, and we were

painfully struck with the bad management of the French commissariat, which left the greatest part of the troops without food sometimes for two or three days. The guilty carelessness of a department that boasted of its good organisation has been certainly one of the principal causes of the French reverses, and the military *intendants* of the army ought to be brought before a council of war to explain their neglect so fatal to their countrymen, and if proved guilty, they ought to be punished with all the severity of the law.

At about 4 o'clock we reached a plateau commanding a full view of the valley of the Moselle and of the city of Metz, and from there we had also an open sight of the country around. Masses of Prussians were camped at about three miles distance, some of their columns facing the village of Gravelotte. Close to the village, and occupying a part of the *défilés* we had just come through, the 2nd, 3rd, and 4th corps d'armée were in position (*rangées en bataille*) the garde as reserve, their line of battle extending from

“*la ferme*” right up to Gravelotte—some of the regiments spread in skirmishing, some others operating evolutions towards the enemy’s lines; a battle was imminent; the Prussian plan was to cut the retreat of the French army on Verdun.

The Quartier Impérial, and the head-quarters of Marshal Bazaine, were in the village. I saw the Emperor. Prince Napoleon and the Prince Imperial were standing by themselves at the door of an inn. The young Prince, although pale, was looking well in his uniform, and if it had not been for the star of the legion of honour on his breast, he would have been taken for a young school-boy in his holiday clothes.

However, the engagement did not take place on that evening, and early on the morning of the 16th, the Emperor, the Prince and his suite, left for Verdun *en route* for the Camp de Châlons. The Imperial convoy was escorted by the 2nd and 3rd regiments of Chasseurs d’Afrique, and by a regiment of artillery with its batteries.

On Tuesday, the 16th, Marshal Bazaine ordered the continuation of the movement of retreat on Verdun. Frossard with the 2nd corps was leading the way; and when nearing Vionville, the Prussians appeared on the south, from his left flank. The General at once took position to receive them: a vigorous attack began, the 2nd corps held its ground; the other corps behind them, the 4th with Ladmirault at Rezonville, on the southern road to Verdun; the third, with General Decaen and Marshal Canrobert, between Rezonville and Gravelotte, arrived to support Frossard; they successively took part in the action, and towards 2 o'clock the whole line, was engaged in battle on the space included between Doncourt and Vionville, on the two roads leading to Verdun, right up to the extremity of Gravelotte, where the Garde Impériale had joined in the conflict, with their commander, General Bourbaki.

The Prussians brought into the field an immense force; not less than 200,000 men, commanded by General Steinmetz and Prince Frederick Charles, took

part in the affair, their attacks were rapid and vigorous, often repeated, but constantly repulsed by the French; the distance occupied by the battle was eight miles, the ground hilly, and intersected by rivulets until past Rezonville. The action lasted from 9 o'clock in the morning until nightfall, and ultimately the Prussians were driven back on all the line, notwithstanding the new arrival, at the close of the day, of a fresh Prussian corps of 80,000 men brought up to cut off the left wing of the French army.

The losses were immense on both sides, and the battle of Gravelotte has certainly been one of the bloodiest of the age; not less than 40,000 men were killed or put *hors de combat*—as usual the largest proportion being Prussians.

Marshal Bazaine repulsed the enemy, and remained in possession of the ground he had conquered.

The 2nd corps of General Frossard and the division of cavalry of General de Forton, accomplished prodigies of valour, but at a very dear cost; they lost a great many men, previously to being reinforced by the

of the 18th, and saved his army from being cut off. But he lost a precious day in collecting the wounded and burying the dead.

On the 18th of August, the Prussian troops, strongly reinforced by the reserves of the King, attacked the French army, occupying strong positions near the village of Mars-la-Tour; their forces could be estimated at 220,000 men; their line was standing from Vigneulles up to Ste.-Marie-aux-Chênes, and the quarries of Jaumont, towards Briey. Those quarries, about three miles in length, are at a distance of ten miles from Metz, and the new fortresses built at Metz during the last few years have been erected with stones extracted from those quarries.

To go from Metz to Jaumont you have to follow the road from Metz to Briey, through the villages of Plappeville, Waippz, and Lorry; you can also reach the place by the road of Doncourt, Etain, and Verdun, by way of the village of Armanvillers.

The country is very uneven to the south-east of

Jaumont; between Armanvillers and Lorry, a forest with deep ravines; to the north of Armanvillers the roads of St. Marie-aux-Chênes, the hills of St. Privat, and the mountains above the valley of Montvaux; to the north-east, towards Briey, the fine forest of Avril, bounded by the river Orne; on the right of the river the villages of Gouf and Hemen-court—and farther north, at the confluence of the Orne and Moselle, you see the immense forest of Mozeuvre, and the road to Sierck.

It was through those woods of Mozeuvre that the corps of General Steinmetz, which had been engaged in the battle of the 16th, made its march towards the enemy; and in consequence the engagement of the 18th commenced by the Prussians under Steinmetz, the army of Prince Frederick Charles attacking more to the south, on Doncourt and Mars-la-Tour.

The fighting was even more furious than at Gravelotte; it extended over a larger tract of country, uneven, well wooded, deeply cut with rivulets, and

embracing nearly all the space from Mars-la-Tour towards Briey, in a north-eastern line.

The conflict lasted all day. At different times during that mournful battle, victory seemed to smile again on the French arms, but they were hopelessly outnumbered; and towards the evening, that magnificent army of Marshal Bazaine, the greatest hope of France, was driven back into Metz; but not till it had fought an engagement which will be remembered by the Prussians as a victory achieved by the greatest sacrifices: after nine hours of gallant struggle against the overpowering odds of three to one, the *Armée du Rhin* was definitively cut off from all communication, and the retreat on Châlons rendered impossible.

The affair of the Quarries of Jaumont, so much exaggerated by the French newspapers, has a certain foundation. In the middle of the gigantic contest, Marshal Canrobert charged as a single general of brigade, at the head of two divisions. A hand-to-hand engagement took place between his heroic

columns and the Prussian regiments; and at last, under a heavy fire of mitrailleuses, 8,000 Prussians were repulsed, and precipitated into the Quarries of Jaumont, where they lay mutilated and destroyed. This deed of Marshal Canrobert is reckoned as one of the greatest *actions d'éclat* of the campaign.

The battle-field was offering an awful spectacle on the Friday morning and the following days; heaps of dead bodies were accumulated in every direction, in places as high as two yards, and often the corpses were clasped together. Here again was the deadly work of the mitrailleuses, which I first saw at Borny, and that I shall never forget. In a ravine the bodies were so pressed together that they had not fallen, and were buttressed one against the other. The Prussians slept on the battle-fields. Only three out of nine corpses were French soldiers; the losses were therefore again heavier on the Prussian side, as in the other battles; the Prussians themselves admitted the fact.

The following episode of the battle of Mars-la-Tour is an evident proof of the various successes of the French during the battle, and how nearly they won the day.

Towards the evening, after the repeated attacks of the French corps, at Doncourt, a part of the Prussian infantry, overworn by fatigue, and cruelly decimated, began to yield on the left wing, and to retreat more and more ; the night was approaching, and the result of the day was depending on a success in that portion of the battle-field.

General Von Moltke was counting with anxiety the hours of the day so indispensable to achieve a victory. His fears to see his combinations destroyed by the heroic resistance of the French were increasing, and he kept a look-out towards the south-east, whence he expected the Pomeranians of the 2nd corps d'armée. At last those Pomeranians arrived at the appointed time, they were advancing (*au pas de charge*). Moltke is recognised by them, and cheered ; enthusiastic shouts are re-echoed all

over the columns, and at the sight of the great general a new vigour seems to have been given to the soldiers; they precipitated themselves on the heights and positions occupied by the French, and they completed the victory with a dashing *elan* given by the presence of the chief of the Prussian staff.

At that moment Von Moltke hurried up to rejoin the King; "Sire," said he, "the victory is ours, the enemy is retreating."

Each army was exhausted, the dead were lying sweltering in their blood, the wounded lying in yawning pits, thousands were dying for want of help; the night had come, and its darkness had momentarily veiled that horrible field of carnage.

No official details have yet been given of the battles of Gravelotte and Mars-la-Tour—the events succeeded each other so rapidly that all interest in details has disappeared from the magnitude of the results,—not less a number than 40,000 Frenchmen and 65,000 Prussians lost their lives or were wounded

in the three battles of Borny, Gravelotte, and Mars-la-Tour.

The important fact, which was for so many days kept secret from the French people, was that Bazaine, with the Armée du Rhin, the flower of the French troops, and the état-major général of France, were cut off from Paris, and paralysed in their future movements. It was certainly this advantage gained by the Prussians which had the greatest influence on the future result of the war.

CHAPTER IV.

MARSHAL BAZAINE'S ARMY THROWN ON METZ—INCIDENTS—
MOURMELON'S CAMP—MACMAHON'S ARMY MARCHING ON THE
ARDENNES—MONTMÉDY.

AFTER witnessing the principal events so disastrous, although so glorious to the French arms, I continued my journey to Verdun, outside the Prussian lines. The road to Etain and Verdun bore the signs of the conflicts taking place in their neighbourhood, parties of Uhlans were exploring the highways, and the two regiments of Chasseurs d'Afrique, on their return from escorting the Emperor on his way to the camp of Châlons, were chasing the Prussian éclaireurs.

At the village of Jarny, an escadron of the 2nd Chasseurs d'Afrique, commanded by Colonel de Gallifet, was engaged against 150 Uhlans. After firing of the muskets and an encounter with sword and

spear, the combat continued with a wild scampering of the Uhlans across the fields, closely followed by the Chasseurs at full gallop on their little Arabian thoroughbreds. The chase lasted for some time, and was certainly one of the most interesting sights I viewed in the campaign. The result of that warlike hunting was the capture by the French of thirty Uhlans, and the death of six others.

One hour later, at a village near Etain, our progress was barred by five Uhlans, posted in the middle of the road. My three companions and I decided to resist any attempt to plunder from those gentlemen. The villagers had disappeared; the doors of the houses were closed, and not a living soul to be seen, except the majestic Uhlans, revolvers in hand, and their long spears ornamented with the small standard of the black double-headed eagle of Prussia. Their intention was unmistakeable; they were waiting for us humble civilians, thinking perhaps we were the bearers of the Imperial money chest, or messengers with important despatches.

Prepared for the worst, and excited by the scenes of fighting we had witnessed for the last three days, we were aiming our revolvers at the Uhlans, when twenty-five Chasseurs d'Afrique, dashing out from a neighbouring wood at full speed, put the Prussians to flight, and delivered us from the enemy.

The inhabitants of the village, mad with terror, now opened their windows. The sight of the Chasseurs d'Afrique awoke at once an unexpected valour in their hearts. Monsieur le Maire, after a careful inquiry as to the Uhlans' retreat, declared that he was going to fetch his gun, ready to die in defending the hearths of his *administrés*, but the factious beadle spoiled the effect of the Maire's warlike speech, in observing that the worthy magistrate had waited the attack of the enemy from the cover of his vaulted cellar.

Wines and provisions were brought up to celebrate the repulse of the enemy and the imaginary courageous defence of the villagers; toasts were drunk to the glory of France; and the poor peasants who were now so jolly were far from thinking that a few hours

later their houses would be occupied by the enemy, and their own property taken away by the law of requisition.

After a short stay at Verdun and Montmédy, knowing that the communications between that last town and Rheims were not interrupted, I made up my mind to start at once for Rheims, *en route* for the camp of Châlons, and the head-quarters of Marshal MacMahon.

Notwithstanding the contradictory accounts of a new battle since the 18th, and of a successful retreat of Bazaine through the Prussian lines, my opinion was not altered. I was convinced that for the present the Marshal's army, surrounded under Metz by a circle of steel, by an army reinforced every day, and increasing in strength, had not had the least chance of escaping.

An excursion to Longuyon, in company with my friend De Katow, had given me a last proof that the Prussians were extending their positions.

From Longuyon we had advanced to the village of

Benveille, near Pierrepont, the road running through undulating ground, thickly wooded. The village was abandoned, and from the summit of a hill we could distinctly see the Uhlans making for the railway line, and further off a lot of men working on the railway, Prussians cutting the rails, as I ascertained since ; so that the only communication remaining with Metz to convey the wounded, *via* Thionville, was going to be cut.

We retreated at full speed on Montmédy, where we arrived at night in time to start for Rheims, and from thence we came at once to the camp at Mourmelon, five leagues from Châlons, at the Quartier Impérial and head-quarters of Marshal MacMahon.

The camp was occupied by a force of 130,000 men. The Guard Mobile had left for St. Maur, near Paris, and French troops of all descriptions were congregating around Marshal MacMahon and his corps d'armée.

It was said that that very night a great strategic movement, in preparation of a battle, would take

place; that the Emperor was leaving; that all the troops were leaving; and that all was nearly prepared to face the enemy in the great struggle which had been pending for the last few days. Hundreds of carriages, and wagons de réquisition that I knew so well since my incidental voyage on the Monday previous, were loading, or staying around the immense camp. It looked exactly the same as on the famous Sunday, when we thought of leaving Metz at once, and when we witnessed the great battles.

The army under the command of Marshal MacMahon was now composed of the remains of the first corps, brought up by the Marshal from Woerth and Saverne; the corps of De Failly, which had rallied with MacMahon after the retreat from Saverne: the seventh corps of General Félix Douay, which had come from Belford, *via* Paris, by railway; three divisions of the 6th corps left at Mourmelon camp by Canrobert; 10,000 men of the infantry of Marine; and a new corps, under General Lebrun, formed of

young soldiers,—made altogether a force of 130,000 men.

That new army had been assembled at a short notice ; its equipment and war material was completed ; the energy and presence of the Emperor had done a great deal towards it. Another new corps, commanded by General Vinoy, was also nearly formed in Paris, and was on the point of starting to rejoin MacMahon.

The Prussians were at Commercy, and the vanguard of the Crown Prince, already at Vitry, was advancing on Châlons-sur-Marne.

It was probable that a battle would take place in the Champs Cataloniques, between the army of the Prince and the forces under MacMahon ; but the strategy of the French Minister of War, which has since proved so fatal to the French, had decided differently ; MacMahon had received orders to abandon the camp of Mourmelon, and to march to the rescue of Bazaine.

On the Sunday, 21st of August, the camp was left.

The tents of encampment were yet standing, but the little decorations, the triumphal arches, the monuments erected by the soldiers, had been destroyed. The immense canvas town, so populous, so busy the day before, was now empty ; there was the aspect of a vast cemetery and desolation all around ; the wooden canteens, with their doors open, the Quartier Impérial, the villas of the generals, the magazines, were abandoned.

At the village of Mourmelon the restaurants, the cafés, the different stores, where the night before the customers were overflowing, were closing mournfully. All available conveyances had been disposed of, and the few people remaining were preparing for departure. A couple of hundred soldiers and two squadrons of cuirassiers were the remains of the rear-guard, and were preparing also to leave.

I had started for Rheims, and when at four miles from the great Mourmelon, from the top of a hill commanding a splendid view of the plain of Châlons, I discovered large fires lighted on six different parts of

the camp. The tents were soon in flame, and also the woods surrounding, and the splendid *champ de manœuvre*, which for so many years had been the pride of the Imperial staff, was sacrificed at the approach of the enemy.

Further on, 3,000 wagons de réquisition and auxiliary conveyances were occupying the road, and making for Rheims. We had to take our course through the field, and pass the night at the village of Prunay.

We were sitting quietly in a room of the principal *auberge*, enjoying the meagre provisions we had gathered at such an hour of the night, and in a country where the sudden passage of troops had made eatables scarce, when a rush of ten villagers invaded our place, and disturbed our serenity. The new-comers were armed with sticks, which at the moment appeared to me fantastical, and their visit had no other object than to give us a good thrashing, previously to taking us prisoners as Prussian spies. Katow and I had already experienced similar adventures, and we knew well how to calm the heroic enter-

prise of the peasants. Drawing at once our revolvers, we explained that if two of them, after examining our papers, did not satisfy the others of our identity as Frenchmen, we were ready to defend our rights and our persons. The mob withdrew, and two of the leaders having touched our passports without even looking at them, declared we were their worthy compatriots, and a few minutes later the *petit vin* of the village was cementing our ties of friendship, and if we had insisted the citizenship of Prunay would have been conferred upon us.

Early the next morning we arrived at Rheims. The Emperor was staying at the Château de Madame Sennard; the marshal was camping in the middle of his army, all around the city. It was whispered that the whole of MacMahon's army was on the point of starting on a strategic plan which would infallibly lead to important results. The greatest confidence was prevailing amongst the population, but a few words of information I had obtained from one of the leading personages of the city was far from giving

me reason to share the hopes of the public. It was evident that Bazaine's retreat on Verdun had been cut off, that his movements were paralysed, and that the Crown Prince, instead of marching on Paris, was now following the army of MacMahon to thwart his endeavours to rescue the army of the Rhine from its perilous position.

Being perfectly convinced that the army of MacMahon would march towards Metz, I at once retraced my steps towards Montmédy and the Belgian frontier, being sure that I would have the greatest chance of being present at any future event.

I reached Montmédy on the 20th of August, and I was astonished at the unusual movement which had suddenly enlivened the little town, at the presence of the commissary-in-chief of the army (Intendant-General Wolf), of the surgeon-in-chief (Baron Larrey), and of the great supplies of provisions assembling in the place.

Montmédy, although the seat of a sous-prefecture of the Meuse, has only a population of about 3,000

inhabitants ; it is situated at the extreme frontier of the department of the Meuse, on the borders of the Belgian province of Luxemburg, and at about three miles from the Belgian territory. The town is divided in two parts; the upper town encircled in the walls of the fortress, the lower town at the foot of the fortified rocks.

The fortress is certainly, by its position on the top of an elevated rock, as strong as any secondary frontier town; the fortified works are very powerful, and the natural rocks on which they are built command a complete defence of the country around.

The fortress is well armed, and the artillery service in the hands of the Gardes Mobiles. A superior officer commands the place, and efficient battalions of well-trained Mobiles form the garrison, together with non-commissioned officers of the army.

At that moment the importance of Montmédy consisted in the railway line on the Ardennes, the rails having been cut by the Prussians in the direction

of Thionville. The line from Montmédy to Sedan (and les Ardennes) was then the only one remaining for carrying the victuals for the French. Superior officers of the commissariat, surgeon-majors of the army, had arrived there. All carts and carriages had been brought into requisition. Provisions and stores were gathered in, and an order from the mayor had just been issued to prepare a certain number of beds for the wounded, and to every householder to keep some broth ready. An engagement was expected in the neighbourhood, but no soldiers had been seen yet. Many rumours were current; it was said that one of MacMahon's corps d'armée was approaching in the direction of Stenay, and another corps in another direction.

Great excitement was prevailing in all quarters, families were leaving in crowds for Belgium; the remaining inhabitants looked at every one who entered the town in the most suspicious manner; you heard at every minute, "He must be a spy." Then you were surrounded, and your papers

↑ examined, or you were given in charge of the gendarmes and douaniers.

In the middle of the excitement, I saw a little tiny priest between two gendarmes, surrounded by Gardes Mobiles and a mob of roughs. The little curate was talking and gesticulating in the midst of his guardians.

At the railway station the little priest, who is curate of a village five miles' distant, was discussing about the war, and finished his speech by saying—"Ah! you have not finished with the Prussians; it is only the beginning, and God has sent them on you to punish Frenchmen for their sins." It was quite enough. Cries of "*A bas les Prussiens!*" were heard, and my little friend carried away by the mob and given into the hands of the gendarmes, who arrested him, but they must have had some difficulty in staying his tongue.

In the evening a telegram arrived to the Commandant de Place, that MacMahon was advancing on Stenay; and although the great combination was

kept secret, there was no doubt that Montmédy was chosen as a centre of junction of the two French armies.

The Prussian Uhlans were in the meantime continuing their dashing raid from Longwy and Longuyon. At Lamouilly and Chauvancy, on the Sedan railway line, they had cut the rails; an encounter had taken place, they were repulsed, four wounded were just brought into Montmédy, and men were sent to repair the line.

Mezières, Sedan, and Montmédy were suddenly becoming of vital importance to the French operations, and the keeping of that line of railway was an absolute necessity to the strategic movements of the marshal, and to his resources for supplies and reinforcements.

The Prussians were in great force at Vouziers, Grand Pré, Dom-sur-Meuse, and a column marching on Rethel, so that a collision between the two armies was imminent.

On the 28th of August a distant artillery fire was

heard from Montmédy in the direction of Chauvancy, and also more to the west in the direction of Buzancy.

I started on horseback for Chauvancy, miles distant, and following partly the railway line, at ten o'clock I stopped at a little farm on a hill, whence I had a full view of an outpost engagement, which I shall relate.

A peloton of forty-eight men of the 6th Regiment of the line had been detached from Sedan to guard the railway line at Chauvancy; the Uhlans had already cut the line the day previously, and after an hour's fighting they had been repulsed. The communications were re-established. A few wounded had been brought to Montmédy, and the new detachment that was there that morning had only arrived the day before.

At nine o'clock on the 28th, 200 men of the Prussian Génie and 400 Uhlans suddenly emerged from a neighbouring wood, west of Chauvancy, and began the attack on the French peloton of the

6th of the line. The forty-eight Frenchmen, commanded by a captain, bravely sustained the first shock; they put themselves *en tirailleur*; and at ten o'clock, when I came in sight of the combat, they were yet masters of the station, fighting after the fashion of the Algerian tirailleurs. About twenty different attacks were renewed in my presence, and great was my astonishment in seeing these few soldiers, nearly overlapped on either side, continuing their fire under protection of fences, trees, barns, &c. At about eleven o'clock they were dislodged from the station, and an hour after I could see the Prussian infantry working to destroy the line, and the Uhlans surrounding the place.

Nine French soldiers were killed, six had been wounded, and passed close to me on their way to Montmédy. They were lying on a large van full of straw. Eighteen men, including the captain, remained prisoners.

The Prussians had twenty-three men *hors de combat*.

At Buzancy an outpost engagement was taking place nearly at the same moment. And the great battles which began by the engagement of Beaumont, to conclude at Sedan, were going to take place, and to astonish the world by their astounding results, and the immensity of the French disasters.

CHAPTER V.

ENGAGEMENTS OF BEAUMONT, MOUZON AND DOUZY—BATTLE OF
SEDAN—THE EMPEROR UNDER FIRE!—THE CUIRASSIERS AND
CHASSEURS D'AFRIQUE.

LEAVING Chauvancy, I started for the Belgian frontier, and, after a night's rest, I continued my journey without other guide other than the noise of the cannonade, and, following the neutral frontier, to avoid the Prussian *éclaireurs*, I gained Florenville, and arrived late in the evening at Carignan (Ardennes).

Carignan, a little frontier town on the railway line from Sedan to Montmédy, is situated at about sixteen miles from this last town, but at least thirty by the road I had followed.

In the evening the greater part of Marshal MacMahon's army had arrived, and was camping at

Vaux, at two miles from the town; they came from Mouzon and Moulins. The Emperor had also arrived in the morning, from the same place. A few of his aides-de-camp and household were busy in making arrangements for the stay of his Majesty. I met there several of my old acquaintances of Metz, but not one officer from the head-quarters of the Army of the Rhine; and when I asked for them, the same invariable answer was given,—we have heard nothing since the 18th. And I was told that I left just in good time; the Titanic conflict, which will stand unparalleled in history, had practically begun the day before at Beaumont, between the 5th French corps d'armée of General De Failly, and the 4th and 12th Saxon corps.

On Monday, the 29th, General De Failly, commanding the van-guard of MacMahon's army, was encamping near Beaumont, to give rest to his troops, and give them time to take a substantial meal. Owing to the fine weather, the general had given orders to clean the chassepots, and to attend to many

details neglected during the *marche forcée*, they had effected from Rheims. With a guilty carelessness, which will be, and had been treated as treason, De Failly appears to have neglected the first care of vigilance, so indispensable to an army at all times, and especially when it is well known that the enemy is marching to an encounter. No vedettes had been posted around the encampment, and no *éclaireurs* sent to reconnoitre the neighbourhood.

The Prussians, always so well informed of the doings and position of their enemy, lost no time, and took a terrible advantage of those unpardonable faults, which were the principal cause of Marshal MacMahon's disasters.

Making their approach along cover of the woods, the Saxons, 60,000 in number, took by a regular surprise the full corps of De Failly. With a dashing raid, executed simultaneously, they precipitated themselves in masses on the French soldiers, completely disarmed. A full brigade was made prisoners before having time to seize their chassepots. Only one battery of the

strong artillery of De Failly had time to take position. The fight was, however, well sustained by the troops who had the chance to handle their weapons. The engagement lasted several hours, amongst a horrible carnage, and at last the French were driven back across the Meuse at Mouzon, leaving in the enemy's power twelve pieces of cannon, six mitrailleuses, and several thousand prisoners.

At 10 o'clock on the morning of the Tuesday, the Saxons, reinforced by the 1st Bavarian Corps and the vanguard of the Crown Prince of Prussia, resumed their attack, at Mouzon, on the remains of De Failly's corps, and a large reinforcement from the main army, which was encamping at Vaux, near Carignan.

The country around Carignan and Vaux is very uneven and hilly. A large plateau, where is situated the farm of Labahiville, commands a view of the encampment, and of the meadows around Mouzon, which is five miles further on.

I was visiting the encampment at Vaux ; there, and

a few miles around, were assembled about 100,000 men, part of the same forces that I saw at Châlons and Rheims. I did not see the marshal, and the inquiries I was making were cut short by the noise of the cannonade in the direction of Mouzon. I at once made for the most elevated point, and found myself at the farm of Labahiville, where the Emperor himself and his staff had been since the morning. Cannonading was increasing, and movements of large bodies of troops were distinguished now and then in the middle of the smoke, and of artillery fire. The French were occupying a strong position, with Carignan on their left, their front to the east.

At four o'clock the engagement had become more serious; MacMahon had joined in the fight with the greater part of his troops, and the struggle was now at its greatest pitch. The Prussians were winning ground, and, later in the evening, the French army was in full retreat on Sedan.

The last hours of that combat witnessed a desperate contest, great slaughter taking place on both sides;

How shall I be able to narrate the many gallant deeds done during those three days of warfare, which form an inherent part of the battle of Sedan? The heroic defence of that noble army against an overwhelming number; the charges of that brave cavalry; those daring attacks *à la baïonnette* of the Zouaves and Turcos; the thousands of *actions d'éclat*, and, at last, the capitulation, for want of ammunition, of 80,000 men, who would have preferred to die, if they had been consulted, sooner than to tarnish the glorious standards of their ancestors.

On the 30th, MacMahon, when in full retreat on Sedan, was closely pursued by the enemy, and was attacked when crossing the Plaine de Douzy. For several hours in the afternoon, and till nine in the evening, the engagement was terrific; it extended nearly four miles, between Douzy, Armigny, and Brevilly, at about five miles from Carignan, and at an equal distance from Sedan. In the early part of the battle the French had been winning ground, and had occupied the heights, where one hour before the Prussian

Artillery had been making fearful havoc in their ranks.

From the top of a hill, at two miles from the centre of the battle fields, I carefully watched the progress of both armies, the taking and changing of the different positions. By a rapid movement, the Prussians, who had considerably increased in number since the day before, were surrounding the right flank of the French, and trying all their efforts to drive them on the Belgian frontier; but soon, between the dust brought up by cavalry charges, and the smoke of the artillery, the columns of soldiers disappeared as in a cloud, and I could not form an exact idea of the state of things.

When I left at nightfall for the village of Messincourt, where I spent the night, the result of the day appeared to me as a drawn battle, the French holding the same positions as in the morning. But the Prussians had now their object. They had stopped the retreating of the French army on Sedan and Mezières; and with the reinforcements

received, and the new ones they were expecting, they remained confident that up to that moment they had already executed the prologue of the bloody drama.

Although crossing the battle-field, I did not stop to appreciate the number of the victims. They were very large on each side, and it would have required a marble heart to make those sad calculations; it was quite enough to stay during the engagements, and to witness those scenes of carnage, when sustained by excitement, the smell of powder, and the undeniable fascination which attracts involuntarily.

Since the Monday, the dead were left unburied, and many wounded abandoned, who died for want of help. The services of the ambulances had not yet been organised on the spot, and in the middle of those villages abandoned by the inhabitants, and pilfered by the armies, nobody had remained to succour the unfortunate sufferers, and no resources remained to comfort them. Hundreds died neglected, when a charitable hand could have saved their life.

The 1st of September will make a sad page in the

history of France, and that date will also certainly mark in the annals of war one of the most sanguinary contests which perhaps ever took place. I had observed since daylight all the movements, and up to two o'clock a rapid and continual cannonade had been increasing, and an infuriated and desperate fight was going on on both sides without interruption. From my point of observation on the flank of the battle-field, and within about two miles of it, I could distinguish nearly all the movements. New corps d'armée arriving successively round the hills, columns advancing and retrograding, batteries of artillery taking new positions were being annihilated in the middle of the confusion. I tried to appreciate the number of troops engaged—I should say at least 300,000 men on the Prussian side, and 120,000 on the French.

The battle-field comprised a space of about four miles, on the line between Carignan and Sedan, in a north-west direction; it embraced a large tract of country right and left of the Meuse and Chiers rivers. It encircled the villages of B. Waldencourt,

Bazeilles, Nouilly, Douzy, and Brevilly, the village of Tellaigne being at the extreme point to the south-east, Sedan at the corresponding point on the north-west, the centre of the battle being at Douzy, at the junction of the Meuse and Chiers, on a plain nearly three miles in width, at six miles from the Belgian frontier. As early as two o'clock in the morning the cannonade began and the attack commenced; at four o'clock, A.M., the French army had fully advanced from the direction of Sedan, and from that hour the whole of the artillery were engaged, and the battle was developed in all its fury. Up to half-past eleven o'clock the French had been winning ground, their progress forward being perfectly sustained, and the retiring of the Prussian columns to the south and the withdrawal of their batteries were perfectly noticeable. At a quarter to twelve a stand-still of the principal corps d'armée took place, which lasted about twenty minutes, and the engagement began again along all the line with increasing fury.

At this time the position of the two armies was exactly thus :—

The French army, with its right wing sustained against the fortress of Sedan, turning its back to the Belgian territory, was occupying the villages of Balan, Bazeilles, Douzy, up to the Douzy Sugar Works, and mastering the point where the rivers Meuse and Chiers make their junction. The Prussian army occupied the villages of Tellaigue (Carignan side), Brevilly, Nouilly, and Waldencourt, their staff being at Nouilly; the confluence of the two rivers being about the centre of operations.

The Prussians were commanded by the Crown Prince of Saxony and the Crown Prince of Prussia, under the chief command of the King and of General von Moltke.

The French, owing to bad luck and misfortunes, had by a fatal chance lost since the morning the services of their commander-in-chief. Marshal MacMahon, seriously wounded, had been carried away from the *champ de bataille*, and replaced by a general, the oldest in rank, General de Wimpffen, just arrived from Africa, and scarcely known to the

part of the army; thence a want of confidence on the part of the troops, on which I shall have occasion to speak in the course of this narrative.

At twelve o'clock the arrival of German reinforcements gave suddenly a new aspect to the battle-field, and brought a desperate change amongst the French divisions. The reserve of the army of the Crown Prince had arrived on the battle-field. It was a complete corps d'armée of fresh troops coming to decide the contest. It was a second arrival of Blucher; and, as at Waterloo, the results were going to be the same for the eagles of the Napoleons. From my point of observation I could distinguish the different regiments composing that new corps. The weather was magnificent, and a radiant sun was shining on the uniforms of the soldiers taking position on the right wing of the French. Infantry, cavalry, and artillery were advancing as in a parade.

✓ The cannon was thundering from the heights of Froncheval, and the bullets and shells were now falling on the village of Bazeilles, placed between two fires.

Bazeilles was soon in flames. A wild terror spread amongst the inhabitants who had remained. Barri-
cades were formed in the streets, and the villagers
opposed for a moment a heroic resistance, checking
the advance of a division of Bavarians ; but their suc-
cess was of a short duration. The village was set on
fire ; and the Germans, infuriated in the middle of
the carnage, destroyed entirely the houses, and en-
circling the village, left the inhabitants to perish in
the flames. Nothing remains now of Bazeilles except
débris, attesting one of the most barbarous episodes of
those bloody days. Women and children were buried
under the ruins. The escape had been impossible.
Willers-Cernay and Waldincourt were also on fire.

It was now two o'clock, p.m., and the positions
of the troops were standing as follows :—

On the left wing, the corps of General Lebrun, who
had been engaged all the day at Bazeilles, on the road
from Carignan to Mezières, had been nearly routed,
and thrown on Balan and the bridge of Torcy.

In the centre, the first corps, commanded by



General Ducrot, and the 5th corps, which had been commanded by General de Wimpffen up to the moment he assumed the command in chief, and now by the brave General Guyot de Lesparre, had abandoned the heights of Daigny, but were fiercely fighting between Moncelle and Givonne.

On the right wing, the 7th corps, General Félix Douay, was defending foot by foot its positions, extending from Floing to Illy.

The Bavarians, commanded by General Von der Tann, were occupying Douzy and Bazeilles, sustained from the heights of those places by a powerful artillery, and by the Saxons of the Crown Prince of Saxony. The Garde Royale, sustained by the 5th and 11th Prussian corps, was engaged on all the line, and specially with the troops of General Ducrot at Givonne.

The corps of Wurtemberg was advancing from Donchery. The Crown Prince and the King had remained during the greatest part of the battle on the heights of the left shore of the Meuse. From those hills they were carefully watching the execution of the plan of

General von Moltke, which consisted in encircling the French army around Sedan, and cutting off at once all possibility of retreat on Mezières.

The battle was raging in all its fury, and the French and Prussians were fighting heroically. In taking the supreme command, General de Wimpffen, thinking that the retreat on Mezières was impossible to execute in open day by an army already exhausted by the previous battles and quick marches, had abandoned that last part of the plans of MacMahon, and had resolved to sustain a defensive battle.

But at three o'clock the troops of the 7th corps posted near the woods of La Garenne, at the farm of the same name, were exposed to a destructive fire; the Prussian shells were decimating their ranks; the position was indefensible. Three times General Douay tried to establish his batteries to answer to the Prussian artillery; each time they were dismounted in less than ten minutes. A retreat to his right on Illy was also rendered impossible by the superior Prussian forces who were advancing by a turning movement

under cover of ten batteries of artillery in position on the plateau.

The 12th corps was more successful on its left wing. The two divisions of infantry de Marine, commanded by General Martin des Paillères, were performing prodigies of valour. General Wimpffen, joining the 12th corps with a reinforcement, thought that by a vigorous offensive attack he would be able to succour the right wing, to throw the enemy on to the Meuse, and to open its way on Carignan and Montmédy.

That movement was executed with a dash which appeared irresistible. General de Paillères, at the head of his marine infantry, overthrew the first columns of the enemy. Unfortunately the movement was not followed by the 1st and 7th corps, who had just retreated under the protection of the cannons of Sedan, and General Lebrun was unable to continue a plan which might have saved the greatest part of the French army.

The Germans were progressing, enveloping the right and left wing of the French army. They were already

at Givonne and La Chapelle; Balan and Torcy were also occupied by their columns, and the French centre, thrown on the fortress of Sedan, was making sortie on sortie under the protection of the cannons of the fortress. General de Wimpffen had lost his last chance of executing a retreat.

In the middle of the contest a full regiment of Prussian dragoons was completely destroyed by a battery of mitrailleuses, and about the same time a French brigade was *culbutée* by the German artillery.

The French cavalry took a glorious part in the battle. For several hours a full division, composed of two regiments of cuirassiers, the 1st and 4th, of two regiments of Chasseurs d'Afrique, the 2nd and 3rd, and commanded by General de Marguerie, had been placed and left under the fire of the Prussian artillery. They were exasperated at their own inaction, and notwithstanding the orders of their chiefs, they had attempted several times to charge forward.

General Marguerie, taking on himself the responsibility, and preferring a probable death in the mêlée to a useless inaction, was heard to command the charge—"Au galop." The order was instantly repeated by all the chefs de corps, and immediately Commandant d'Alincourt with the 1st Cuirassiers, and Colonel de Gallifet with the 2nd Chasseurs d'Afrique, heading the terrible column to a certain death, precipitated themselves as a torrent on the German legions. Like the famous charge of Balaclava, it was a daring but a desperate movement forward. Showers of bullets and shells, and walls of bayonets, met the tremendous shock. Artillery and infantry crushed against the horses. Falling men were trodden in the conflict under the horses' hoofs. A regiment of Germans threw down their arms at the furious approach, and asked to surrender; but the heroes of that glorious fight had no time to stop; they advanced in the thick of the Prussian columns with an audacity without example, till arrived in a ravine, where under the fire of the artillery of the enemy their glorious exploits

were terminated by the destruction of the principal part of their squadron.

General de Marguerie, seriously wounded by a shell, died a few hours later. The brilliant officers, who had just renewed the chivalric *action d'éclat* of the olden times, fell bravely amongst their soldiers. Colonel de Gallifet, with about one hundred men left of his magnificent regiment, cut his way through the Prussian lines.

At four o'clock the French army was encircled and thrown entirely on Sedan by the enemy. The defeat was complete. The Emperor, since the morning had been in the thick of the fire, sword in hand, exciting the troops, and braving all dangers. Marching at the head of a column of attack, Napoleon III. was for a few hours exposed to the greatest danger; and as an ocular witness, I can vouch for the truthfulness of the fact. The bullets, the shells, were falling in showers around him. The Emperor sustained the fame of personal bravery of his early years. On the insistence of his staff, at last, not find

death he was looking for, he retreated into the fortress, and presided at the *last sorties* of the brave troops, who were willing to fight again ; but the ammunition had run short, and the situation was desperate.

Then commenced a complete rout through the forests of the Ardennes and the woods on the borders of Belgian territory. The brigade of General de Sartinues, fighting to the last, was cut off from its corps d'armée, and made prisoners after considerable loss.

The confusion of the rout was extreme. Officers of all ranks, colonels, generals, soldiers, were mixed together ; and the Prussian batteries aimed on those masses were continuing their work of destruction.

Nearly all the left wing of the French army, cut from the centre and encircled by the fire of the Prussian artillery, broke the ranks of its columns, and were dispersed in the forest. Detachments of Prussian cavalry were sent to their pursuit in every direction ; and it seems incredible how large was the number of dead, wounded, and prisoners in that last affair.

From 15,000 to 20,000 men were annihilated within those last two hours, and 8000 prisoners were made.

The carnage of the day was immense, the Prussian losses amounting to 32,000 men killed or wounded. At thirty minutes past five the noise of the cannonade ceased: the flag of truce was floating on the citadel of Sedan. The great day of humiliation of the French was approaching. Previous to my narrative of that event, which will remain as an indelible stain in the military history of France, I shall say a few words on the massacre at Bazeilles.

The village was placed since the morning between the two fires of the belligerents. The first incendiary spark may as probably have been thrown by French artillery as by German cannons; but towards the evening the destruction of the village was completed by the Bavarians. It has not been proved yet if the excesses of which the Germans are accused have been really committed in a spirit of vengeance; and they have not been done to the extent published by several

correspondents who appeared on the battle-fields five or six days after the action.

On the morning after the battle of the 1st, my impression, *de visu*, was that the unfortunate inhabitants had been fatally caught in the middle of the struggle, too late for leaving, too late to escape from a certain death.

Bazeilles was for several hours the centre of the principal fighting; the possession of it was disputed with incredible desperation, and the poor villagers were buried amongst the soldiers of both armies, amongst the ruins of their dwellings. No doubt light will be thrown some day on what took place at the end of the battles; but any way the destruction of that little place with its 2,000 inhabitants will be remembered as a sad illustration of the calamities of warfare.

CHAPTER VI.

CAPITULATION OF SEDAN—THE BATTLE-FIELD—PRISONERS OF WAR—ATTACK ON MONTMÉDY.

It is a curious coincidence that the news of the great disaster of Sedan was announced to England by the channel of a Frenchman. Through a happy concurrence of circumstances, and a little calculation, I was present at the three days' battle, and during the affairs my couriers were hourly carrying from the battle-fields my telegrams and reports to the *Standard*, *via* Belgian post and telegraphs.

Passing the night in the Forest of Ardennes amongst disbanded soldiers, I was apprised early in the morning of the capitulation of Sedan, of the surrender of 80,000 men, the full army of MacMahon, and of the Emperor himself.

The Emperor endeavoured to obtain for the army the best terms of capitulation, but Count Bismarck, explaining that the question was of a military order, the negotiations could only take place between Generals de Wimpffen and Von Moltke. As a prisoner of war, Napoleon refused to entertain all questions relative to the peace, and he left with Bismarck and an escort of White Cuirassiers for the castle of Bellevue near Frenois, where a meeting with the King had been appointed.

In the meantime General de Wimpffen had arrived at the head-quarters of Von Moltke, and the basis of the capitulation, interrupted during the night, was discussed anew, and the following textual document was definitely accepted and signed:—

“ Sedan, Sept. 2.

“ By the chief of the staff of his Majesty King William, Commander-in-Chief of the German armies, and the General Commanding in Chief of the French armies, both with full powers from his Majesty the

King and the Emperor of the French, the following agreement has been concluded :—

“ Art. 1. The French army, under the command of General de Wimpffen, surrounded actually by superior forces around Sedan, are prisoners of war.

“ Art. 2. Owing to the valorous defence of that army, an exception (exemption) is made for all the generals and officers, and for the superior *employés* having rank of officers in the military list, who will give their word of honour in writing not to take up arms against Germany, nor to act in any way against the interests of that nation, till the end of the present war. The officers and *employés* accepting that condition will keep their arms and the effects belonging to them personally.

“ Art. 3. All the other arms and the army material, consisting of flags, eagles, cannons, horses, war ammunitions, military trains, will be surrendered at Sedan by a military commission named by the commander-in-chief, to be given at once to the German commissary.

“ Art. 4. The town of Sedan will be given up at once, in its present state, and no later than the evening of the 2nd of September, to be put at the disposal of the King of Prussia.

“ Art. 5. The officers who will not undertake the engagement mentioned in Article 2, and the troops of the armies, will be conducted with their regiments, to their camps, and in military order.

“ This measure will commence on the 2nd of September, and will terminate on the 3rd; the soldiers will be brought up by the Meuse, near D'Yzes, and put in the hands of the German commissary by their officers, who will then give their commands to their non-commissioned officers. The military surgeons will remain, without exception, at the rear to take care of the wounded.

(Signed) “ WIMPFEN ; MOLTKE.”

The attitude of General de Wimpffen and of the other generals was dignified, and it was not without great hesitation that they consented to sign to the

shame of the French arms ; alone, General Ducrot refused obstinately to consent to any capitulation whatever ; not only he rejected those terms, as far as he was concerned, but he loudly expressed his contempt for those who accepted them. General Ducrot had been acting as chief of the *État-major* General of MacMahon. When the marshal had been wounded in the morning, he took up the command, and the confidence of the army was not abated ; they knew that the general was the right hand of the Marshal, that all his plans would be faithfully carried out by him, and that he was the only one who could replace his chief in the emergency of the moment.

It can be firmly advanced, that if General Ducrot had retained the command, the capitulation of Sedan would not have taken place ; but a fatal order of the Emperor, advised probably by his *entourage*, was sent two hours after the fall of MacMahon, to give the command-in-chief to General Wimpffen, a commander of merit certainly, but arrived from Africa since the last forty-eight hours, unknown to

army, and ignorant of the plans of MacMahon. Unfortunate circumstances precipitated the French deeper and deeper in the abyss. The last word is not said on that awful event. History will enlighten the facts, and the guilty will be brought to account to posterity. The closing scene around Sedan—the capitulation, the surrender of the Emperor—will furnish one of the most surprising dramas in the history of the world. MacMahon's tactics will be discussed; the strategy of that campaign will be severely blamed, to say the least, in its execution.

The plans were based on false calculations. The army of MacMahon had a good start. From the 21st of August (the day on which the Marshal had left the camp of Mourmelon) up to the 28th (the day of the first encounter with the Prussians), he had had plenty of time to cross the Meuse, and to advance well on his way to Metz, before the Crown Prince could have possibly attacked his flank.

But it seems that the greatest part of his troops

—composed, with the exception of 60,000 men, of young soldiers just called to service—was not in a state to effect strong marches. To this must be added the want of supplies, the demoralisation of the soldiers who had fought at Woerth and Wissembourg, and the mistake of the immense convoys accompanying, at all times, the French armies. All those elements of delay ought to have been calculated by the general-in-chief before starting with his army on a course so dangerous, where he must have known he could be attacked in front and in flank by an enemy far superior in forces, and be compelled to give battle on a ground difficult for retreating in case of defeat.

The quick march of the Crown Prince, the advance of the Prince of Saxony, the movements of the Marshal, delayed by circumstances probably independent of his will, the guilty carelessness of General de Failly at Beaumont, who allowed himself to be surprised by the enemy, are certainly facts which may be mentioned in favour of the bold plan con-

ceived by the French strategist; but, I repeat it, serious account will have to be given some day to the French nation for the deficiency of its execution.

The French colonels and officers, on hearing the news of the capitulation, were amazed by the greatness of the disaster. They had not been consulted, and their rage was indescribable. The greater part of them refused to sign the disgraceful deed. The colonels hurried to burn the flags and eagles of their regiments; the soldiers, in throwing into the Meuse, their chassepots, swords, ammunition, knapsacks; the artillerymen precipitating cannon and mitrailleuses into the river, so that they should not become the prey of the enemy.

Many brave hearts, who had never flinched before the enemy, were now burning in despair under the weight of their misfortunes. The remains of the 1st regiment of Zouaves, the Chasseurs d'Afrique, and some of the Infantry of Marine, cut their way through the enemy's columns, and, in a supreme effort, where

they lost the greatest part of their comrades, some of those brave soldiers succeeded in escaping from captivity.

When you live amidst excitement you cannot rest ; a sense of wandering about, a want to be useful to somebody, to do your duty, keeps you alive, and gives a strength entirely abnormal to the human frame.

Overcome by fatigue and emotion, by the disasters which had fallen on my country, and my mind fascinated by the painful pictures of misery I had not ceased to see for the last few days, how was it possible to rest and remain quietly inactive ?

I had reached Bouillon, where the events had first been known ; and one hour later I was starting for La Chapelle, a village between Bouillon and Sedan, and from there in the direction of Douzy, the centre of the great battle of Thursday. I wanted to see again and examine that battle-field, which I had only seen in the midst of the cannonade and carnage, and to assure myself that the fatal results

were not exaggerated in my mind, but were really true.

Knowing that La Chapelle and all the country between Sedan and Carignan was now entirely occupied by the victorious Prussians, my only means to penetrate was to sail under a neutral flag, and to follow some Belgian gentlemen, who had agreed to come with me, and to look as fairly like a Belgian as any citizen of that happy country; and under their immediate protection, and the influence of their papers, perfectly *en règle*, I took an excursion around the lines of the victorious enemies of my country, being everywhere perfectly welcome.

Arrived at La Chapelle, we had to go back in the direction of Florenville in order to reach Douzy. La Chapelle was occupied by a Prussian outpost, in charge of a colonel, who explained to us, with the greatest courtesy, that, to go by that way, we should have to cross over the Prussian camps, that it was not in his power to grant us such a permission, but that we could go to Douzy by

another direction, and ask a pass of the Crown Prince.

Accordingly, it was late in the evening when we reached Douzy. After passing several sentinels, we were brought to a staff colonel, who accompanied us through different spots, but always outside the encampments. This gentleman, a Bavarian superior officer, spoke French fluently, and kept us engaged half an hour in a most interesting conversation. He, no more than the soldiers we saw around, was showing the least tendency of boasting about their victories. To several questions we put to him, he answered "The Emperor has surrendered, *c'est un fait accompli* ; MacMahon is severely wounded." At a distance we saw amongst a group of officers, the Prince of Saxony, with Viscount Bismarck, son of the great statesman. The Crown Prince was a few miles further on.

A painful sight presented itself right and left. Some dead, but not yet buried ; some wounded, in the hands of ambulance surgeons ; and a large group of French officers, disarmed, walking mournfully, prisoners on

parole, in the camps. From ten to twelve thousand Frenchmen had been made prisoners in this last affair; the greater part slightly wounded. One of them said to me, "We have been surrounded from every quarter," adding to these melancholy words gestures of despair.

But Prussian soldiers, looking perfectly well, although fatigued, were gathering round us, offering us wines which they seemed to have in great quantities. I was thinking of my host of the Hôtel de la Gare at Carignan, who had told me how his cellars had been plundered, and how the Prince of Saxony interfered, and had threatened the plunderers to have them shot for their conduct. But they stuck to the wine (is it not, unfortunately, *les droits du vainqueur*?) any way, the soldiers' generosity was most genuine towards us, (Belgians).

We were allowed to advance further on, and the battle-field and the general aspect of things was not calculated to give a lively turn to our promenade. The field was still strewn with dead bodies, amongst broken guns, bayonets, knapsacks, uniforms of

soldiers, thrown-away swords and scabbards—amongst these warlike *débris*, men by hundreds were lying dead. There was an artillery cart with the dead horses, close by a Prussian Captain, lying dead, was a French chasseur. Blood, blood, everywhere ; further on, a Zouave, breast opened, the arms cut ; and further on again, a large grave with many corpses in it, and left uncovered, pending new arrivals in that last home of the victims of war. These sights of horror were too much emotion for one day. We left in haste.

In the woods across the Belgian frontier we saw some wounded, who had managed to creep from the battle-field and had been rescued by the benevolent inhabitants, and the American and English ambulances. A few hours later we met a van full of those unfortunate soldiers, dangerously wounded ; blood was even then trickling through the straw in the cart all along the roadway. Enough of these horrible descriptions !

Prisoners continued to arrive in the different Belgian towns—Zouaves, Turcos, chasseurs, cavalry and artil-

lery officers, linesmen—all in the most desperate condition, their clothes torn up, their feet stained with blood, all harassed and weakened by fatigue; many wounded, some could scarcely walk.

The greatest part of them were belonging to De Failly's corps, which was partially annihilated on the Tuesday, and entirely cut off from the main left wing on the 1st of September. It was then asserted that the soldiers, mad at the unfitness and neglect of their chief, in a moment of fury and indignation had shot him, but even now the case is doubtful that he is even dead.

A great many Prussian prisoners had also arrived in Belgium; all of them, French or German, were treated with the greatest kindness by the officers and soldiers of the Belgian army; they were directed to Namur; from there the Prussians were sent to Bruges, and the French to the camp of Beverloo.

Officers and soldiers were unanimous in pitying their Emperor's fate. They blamed the persons around him, the incapacity of his generals, to

whom they fully attributed the real cause of the disasters which had befallen the French army. Never, perhaps, has the words of the Great Napoleon been found so correct: "*Il vaut mieux," disait-il, "un troupeau de moutons commandé par des lions, qu'un troupeau de lions commandé par des moutons."* It is not sufficient to have legions of brave and heroic soldiers, full of devotedness, and ready for all sacrifices ; it is of vital necessity to have those soldiers commanded by able and experienced generals, and not by fatuous court officers.

The French army is not without many able commanders. Bazaine, MacMahon, Canrobert, Trochu, Bourbaki, many subaltern superior officers, have all the aptitudes and qualities required, but they have only come into command when the faults had been committed, when the situation was compromised, when the two great decisive blows had been struck at the very starting of the campaign. On this subject my opinion has not varied. On the 10th of August I wrote from Metz, "For me, and it is also the opinion of people

highly placed in official circles, the German empire is already made, and even a French victory would not hinder its fulfilment." My words have turned out true: it cannot be disguised, the Germanic and Protestant races are conquering the Latins and Catholic races; the head of the representatives of the great Latin people—France, the centre of antique and modern civilisation, is severely wounded: its secular influence passing suddenly to its Germanic rival.

I was passing Montmédy when the little fortress was first attacked by the Prussians. After the great battles I had witnessed since the commencement of the campaign, the siege of a little place such as Montmédy did look to me as a very secondary action; a plaything, or as a sham fight in ordinary volunteer exercise; not that the Prussian batteries storming the northern walls of the little fortress were to be despised—on the contrary, they were powerful, and seven in number, and I could perceive six more in the rear, with a body of about 6000 men close by. The fire was well directed, but cautiously, the batteries being kept under cover by

undulating grounds, while the cannon of the fortress were answering gamely, and did at different intervals compel the enemy to alter their plan of attack. The Prussian shells were principally directed towards the tops of the houses, with evident intention to set fire to the place. That object had already been partially obtained, but the people of Montmédy, commanded by an old captain and their sous-prefect, an ex-lieutenant of the Imperial navy, did not surrender; batteries having retreated out of reach of the fortress, the soldiers were taking comfortably some food and refreshments. To see the horses grazing quietly around the encampment, the officers going about amongst the crowd of soldiers, was a picture such as one might see at Wimbledon during the encampment. For me, with my mind full of the horrible carnage of the last week's battles, of the heroic struggles, of the Titanic efforts of the vanquished, I almost with relief looked at this little affair. A mile and a half separated me from the fortress and the enemy, and I was as completely my own master as possible.

It is not easy to understand why the Prussians were losing time in attacking Montmédy. Very useless it would seem in the present state of affairs, but when it was known that within the walls were stored and assembled all the provisions, live stock, &c., sent lately in view of the arrival of MacMahon's army, its importance was understood: it would have been a precious capture for the Prussians in their needy condition. Towards the evening the Prussians did retire, and they gave up besieging the little fortress.

The following day I entered Montmédy to judge for myself of the damage made by the storming, and to have details from the defenders who had so bravely resisted and sworn not to surrender.

For six hours the fire directed on the town was at the rate of ten shots per minute, and the return from the fortress about seven in the same time. The Prussian bombs were all directed against the buildings inside the walls, their object being evidently to set the place on fire and obtain a prompt capitulation. The Palace of Justice and several houses were entirely

burnt; the church, pierced all over by bullets, was then standing, and the provisions stored in it were safe. Two men were killed and five wounded.

The besiegers had one battery dismounted, and must have lost many men. At 12 o'clock, when they momentarily ceased their fire, they sent an order demanding capitulation. The commandant peremptorily refused, and answered that he was determined to blow up the place sooner than give in.

Too much praise cannot be given to that brave commandant. His name is Rebaul. He is a retired cavalry captain. His second—a captain of artillery of the Mobile Guard, and ex-commander in the merchant service, named Loiarec—was equally determined, and, with the sous-prefet, has shown a wonderful skill in pointing the batteries. The greatest praise must be given also to the Guard Mobile, about 500 in number, who have devotedly executed the orders of their commander. Whatever may happen next, Montmédy has done her duty. The little fortress deserves the thanks of the country.

Other attempts have since been made to take Montmédy, but the Germans have up to this day always met with the same resistance.

CHAPTER VII.

THE PRUSSIAN ARMIES AROUND PARIS—THE FORTIFICATIONS—
AT THE REAR OF THE GERMANS—PRUSSIAN ULTIMATUM—
FRANCE AROUSED—WAR TO THE KNIFE—THE FIRST BALLOON
FROM PARIS.

THE Republic had been proclaimed, the Emperor was a prisoner, 80,000 men of the French army had surrendered, the Armée du Rhin was shut up in Metz, and the German armies were surrounding Paris, with no considerable force to stop their plans.

Paris was now the great hope of France, the last serious barrier to foreign invasion, till the provinces, awaking from their slumber, would have time to organise their military resources.

A few notes on the fortifications of Paris, borrowed from authentic documents, may be interesting and instructive.

It was only in 1814, after his reverses, that the Great Napoleon understood how important it would have been for him if Paris had been fortified. During the One Hundred Days he lost no time, and the works for fortifying the capital were commenced, but Waterloo soon stopped the execution of those plans.

After the Revolution of 1830, the project was again renewed, several pamphlets published, and in 1831 the works were again resumed, but peace being probably assured for some time after the siege of Anvers, the works were abandoned for a second time. King Louis Philippe, although a brave soldier at Valmy and Jemmappes, was not a warlike monarch; he was a philanthropist more than a warrior, but he was also a great politician, full of prudence, and knowing how to appreciate the faults of his predecessors.

He had made up his mind to fortify Paris. With several competent military authorities he was of opinion that the best system of defence for the capital

was the erection of several fortresses, built in front and around Paris, leaving out for the present the idea of a rampart to encircle the city.

The opposition in the Chamber was of an entirely different opinion from the King, from his council, and his generals; they pretended that the only way to fortify Paris efficiently was to build a rampart all around the city; the forts around Paris were for them so many representatives of the old Bastille, and a direct threat against the Parisian population. Many citizens were influenced by those arguments, and the question would have remained pending for several years to come, if the fear of a new coalition had not arisen in 1840, and decided at once the solution of the problem.

It was at this juncture of affairs that the Duke of Orléans, the eldest son of Louis Philippe, the intelligent prince who died so unfortunately, proposed a new project combining the two theories; that is to say, to have Paris fortified with circular ramparts as well as with detached fortresses. The illustrious

Marshal Soult asked the Chambers for a credit of 150 millions for that purpose. M. Thiers, who was then chief Minister of the Cabinet, took the affair to heart, and eight days later the Duke of Orléans, with the aid of officers of the Génie, had prepared plans of the fortifications, which were submitted in a full council of the Ministers, and on his own responsibility, M. Thiers and his ministry took up the engagement to have those very plans executed under the direction of Marshal Dode de la Brunerie.

His plans, too rapidly executed, were based on the system of Vauban, but with important modifications. The fortified bastions in front are the great principle of the system. The city is surrounded by an immense polygon of a certain number of sides, and in front of each angle of that polygon a facial work, built as a lozenge, forms the bastion itself. Those bastions are separated one from the other by a space necessary for their joint services, and the spaces on the angle of the polygon are also provided with fortified works.

The continuous precinct of Paris is provided with 94 bastions; they follow a circle, nearly regular, of 22 English miles in circumference, and an imaginary line from centre to centre, from each of the detached fortresses protecting the precinct, would have an extent of 70 miles. These figures will show at once the difficulty of attacking Paris, and experience has proved since that General Von Moltke's precise calculations have for once been baffled; that the energy of General Trochu and of the Parisians may yet save France. Paris has always been patriotic; her children, already renowned for their undaunted bravery, have shown often enough how heroically they know how to die for an idea; they have given, since the investment of the capital, hundreds of brilliant proofs of that heroic courage which is appealed to, to save France from being so severely wounded.

On the 17th of September the German columns were fully enveloping all the eastern parts of Paris, from the northern railway, cut off at Pontoise, up to

the railway of Orléans, which had just been destroyed at Juvisy.

Paris was on the *qui vive*, over 600,000 men were waiting *l'arme au bras*, and alarms taking place constantly, were making the Mobiles familiar with the dangers they were going to incur.

General Trochu's organisation was perfect. The companies of Franc-tireurs, and other volunteers, composed of the most resolute men, adventurers, old soldiers, and hunters, who have carried arms and weapons all their life, were sent forward to the front, either in the very face of the enemy, or between the forts and the walls; they advanced in every direction, harassed the German outposts, and retreated only when meeting too superior forces. These brave marksmen only began their exploits on the 15th of September. These troops formed twelve movable divisions, and although posted on different sections of the military zone, they could easily be transported, at a moment's notice, to a spot more seriously attacked. Their movements were considerably helped and pro-

tected by the guns of the fortresses, and by several regiments of regular troops.

The Parisian Garde Nationale, at all times remarkable for its fine military spirit, was perfectly organised and commanded by brave and resolute chieftains.

For the last two days fighting had been going on between the Prussian outposts and the French, and on the 20th the work of isolation of the capital, pursued by the Germans, was an accomplished fact.

I had arrived in Normandy, and had advanced to the rear of the Germans to follow as much as possible their movements. On the 18th I left Mantes, and was making for Paris, with intention to turn to the south, where a slight cannonade was distinctly heard on the morning; when at a short distance from Meulan, a station of the western railway, my horse was suddenly stopped by five Prussian Uhlans, who, after much entreaty, compelled me to retrace my steps towards Mantes; they were the *éclaireurs* of a large party of Germans, actually engaged in destroying the telegraph and railway line between Paris and Rouen.

All that I could gather during my excursions, was that an engagement had been taking place at Ablon and Athis-Mons.

Ablon is a little village of the Department of Seine-et-Oise, ten miles south by east of Paris. Athis-Mons is situated two miles further on, near the mouth of the river Orge, and close to the Seine and to the station of Juvisy.

The most concentrated troops of the Prussians were directing their attacks from the east to the south: from Charenton to Clamart. Clamart is a township of the Seine, with 3000 inhabitants, and at about four miles from the Paris railway station (*rive gauche*) to Versailles. The forts protecting that side of Paris are Charenton, Ivry, Bicêtre, and Montrouge.

On the 19th an engagement took place at Creteil between 15,000 men of the corps of General Vinoy and some troops of the corps of the Prussian General Vogel de Falkenstein. Early in the morning the divisions of General Vinoy were reconnoitering near Bonneuil; the vanguard, when displaying its skir-

mishers on the hills of Mely, had to sustain a heavy fire of artillery from the enemy. During the night the Prussians, about 40,000 in number, had established their batteries on the top of the hills, on a plateau, naturally strong.

General Vinoy, having so posted his artillery as to protect the retreat of his skirmishers, fought with advantage for two hours, and succeeded in his object of reconnoitering the position of the corps d'armée that was advancing in that direction. The general then retired on Charenton, after inflicting heavy losses on the Prussian ranks, several of the German staff having been killed in the affair. The French losses were 18 killed and 37 wounded.

Skirmishing and slight engagements were now taking place all around Paris, and the capital was so closely hemmed in that no news whatever could be obtained, the Prussians naturally keeping their operations in the dark; it was known, however, that Versailles was occupied already by the Uhlans, and that the court-town of Louis XIV., the palace of the *roi-*

soleil, was designed for the head-quarters of the chiefs of the German armies.

I continued my wanderings at the rear of the Germans, and my excursions on a circuit of about sixty miles had no other object than to find a point where I could penetrate within the Prussian lines, advance nearer to Paris, and witness the different engagements from Meulan and Triel. I first travelled in the direction of St. Germain and Versailles, and retracing my steps, I afterwards came back in the direction of Pontoise, keeping always Meulan and Mantes as a centre from whence I could go back to the west. I was compelled to abandon my projects on three different occasions, and last time at Triel, I met again with Prussian dragoons and Uhlans. After a few explanations, I received orders to go backwards, and at Triel an amiable officer informed me, with the greatest ease and politeness, that if I persisted in advancing through their lines I should certainly be shot. Such a prospect not suiting me just at the time, I retraced my steps towards Mantes.

From my constant peregrinations, as well as from serious information, I knew that the investing of Paris was complete, and that the greatest strength of the Germans was developed from Vincennes to Versailles. Full regiments of their cavalry were exploring the country in a large circuit, their vanguards going as far as forty miles, and levying requisitions in the towns and villages. They were now in great force at Meulan and Triel, on the western line, at only a few miles from Mantes, where they were expected at any moment by the Norman Franc-tireurs, who were in real earnest. If those Franc-tireurs, Mobiles, &c., were skilfully commanded, and sent as guerillas in all directions on the flanks of the Prussian armies, they would soon stop these invasions. A good chief to organise that system, and take a supreme command over those thousands of resolute men, would soon bring about results of more importance than many greater engagements. The German armies were now in the very heart of France, at over 300 miles' distance from their frontier, in the

midst of populations ready to resist if only called upon, and they would be soon placed in a critical position if the system of guerillas, partially organised now, was spread all over the provinces under able and experienced chieftains. I repeated daily to my countrymen, choose your chiefs amongst the daring and the brave, regardless of social position; follow the example of the adventurers in America; elect your chiefs under fire; be led by the bravest and the most intelligent; their ability will soon break through your ranks to put them at the head of your battalions. With such chiefs, with your natural bravery, you will soon get rid of the enemy from your country.

But no, the old routine was prevailing; the richest or the most influential were becoming the commanders, and the men with real capacity, the men stamped by nature, as Cortez, Pizarro, Garibaldi, &c., &c., were left, for want of a chance, forgotten in the midst of the crowd.

I can exemplify, in a souvenir of an episode of many years ago—an episode witnessed by myself—what can

be done by a troop of guerillas, resolute men, when well commanded. In September, 1853, 300 Frenchmen, grantees of a lease for the exploration of mines in the mountains of Arizona, in Mexico, owing to some dispute with the Dictator, Santa-Anna, put themselves in rebellion, under the leadership of Count de Raousset-Boulbon ; they kept successfully a two months' campaign against several thousand Mexican troops, commanded by General Yanez, and took, in open day, from the enemy the town of Hermasillo, in the province of Sonora, a gallant fight of 300 men badly armed, half-starved, against a regular troop of 4,000 men—who were driven away from the town after six hours of hard contest. This fact was recorded by all the foreign newspapers of that year, and the French press was unanimous in the eulogium of the heroic adventurers. France is full yet of those brave citizens. Why should they give in to a successful invader ?

On the 22nd of September, a corps of 30,000 Germans, principally cavalry, with four pieces of artillery,

left Pontoise in the direction of Villeneuve and Poissy. At Triel they put up a bridge on the Seine, to rejoin the forest of St. Germain, where they met with serious impediments to their march, part of the forest having been cut down, and the fallen trees joined at distances by strong wires. The troops who encamped at Pontoise, were under the command of the Duke of Mecklenburg. Heavy requisitions were made in the neighbourhood, but a severe discipline kept. Few excesses were committed in the town after the departure of the principal troops. The departure from Pontoise was quite sudden; the Prussians were leaving with ample booty.

On the 24th of September, the delegation of the Government of the National Defence, sitting at Tours, sent to all parts of France the following official telegram:—

“Prussia wishes to continue the war, and reduce France to the rank of a second-class nation. Prussia wants Alsace and Lorraine, as far as Metz, as a right of conquest. Prussia to consent to an armistice dares

to ask the rendition of Strasburg, of Toul, and the fort of Mont Valérien, the key to Paris."

Such was the ultimatum of Count Bismarck to M. Jules Favre. The answer of the Government of the French National Defence was this. The people of Paris are ready to bury themselves under the ruins of their city. To arms! is the national call to all Frenchmen. War, till complete extermination, is the motto of a great agonised country. All minor events disappeared before such a pronunciamiento of the enemy. Of all the shells which had decimated the French legions, of all the disasters which had so rapidly succeeded from worse to worse for the last two months; of all the humiliations next to the capitulation of Sedan, which had fallen with all their bitterness on a courageous and unfortunate people, none perhaps was more resented, none went more to the heart of every Frenchman than that last cruel and ungenerous dispatch of a victorious enemy. It was the finishing blow of a lucky athlete on his fallen opponent; but it was also the incendiary shell

which was applied to bring a new sphinx from the ashes. The cup was full! France, regenerated by misfortune, rose as one man, animated by the glory of the last efforts. I was at Rouen, in the middle of a large and populous city. The dispatch had just come. The indignation was extreme, and the people were swearing to avenge their honour or die. If they do not keep to their word they deserve their fate.

Whatever may be the result of the unavoidable conflagration, the Prussian government could not choose a better way to arouse the national spirit of France. If I am not mistaken, the struggle will be extreme. Shortly, the Prussian armies will be encircled in a circumference of fire; thousands will become the prey of their powerful artillery, but thousands will survive; the Franks, the Gaulois have risen, the Vendéens and the Chouans—all revive those heroic episodes of devotion to their hearth, to their God, to their country! The men are ready; they are innumerable. I had met thousands on thousands within the last few weeks. Chiefs are wanted, but they will

spring from the masses. The race of Hoche, Moreau, and Larochejacquelin is not exterminated yet. A new era is beginning. The new Teutonic colossus must be checked yet for the sake of civilisation and liberalism.

From the beginning of the war I have impartially recorded the superiority of the Prussian military tactics. No nation can approach them now in the science of making war. Their soldiers are brave and perfectly disciplined, their officers are most efficient, their generals are great strategists and tacticians, their artillery and war material are without equal, their successes have been immense, and their ambition has increased proportionately; but it is the modern invasion, with all its improvements and powers, it is feudality menacing to conquer the best part of Europe. The last struggle of the French nation is of vital interest to her neighbours—will it not be too late when they see it clearly?

On the 23rd of September, the Uhlans had arrived at the village of Mézières-Eponne, and having made

peremptorily their usual requisitions, they were refused by the inhabitants, sustained by a few Franc-tireurs. A conflict took place, four Uhlans were killed, and their companions, after having repulsed their opponents, set the whole of the little village on fire. Several persons were burnt, amongst them a whole family—father, wife, and four little children. It was after that barbarous deed, and when the smoke of the poor village of Mézières was rising towards Mantes, at only four miles' distance, that the Prussian troopers made their entrance in that town. As usual, a vanguard of twelve men, revolver and spear in hand, dashed into the principal street, stopping at the sous-prefecture, and asking for the sous-prefect. That functionary had ignominiously fled, and they had to go to the mayor. After half an hour's pour-parler, the mayor consented to give up the requisitions required, and a sum of about 3000*l.* sterling in cash. Two hours after the amiable visitors had gone with their spoils, directing their steps to new pastures, when they had taken with them as hostages two of

the notables of the town. They were going to burn the miserable old guns of the Garde Nationale of Mantes, when, after some representations, they consented to spare those venerable weapons, and made a present of them to the pompiers, accompanying their gifts with the most ironical laughter.

At only three miles' distance—in the woods of Rosny—a full battalion of Franc-tireurs were at hand, but the authorities of the town positively objected to be defended, for fear of sharing the fate of the village of Mézières. Such a system of terror has been checked since; and it is quite time. I have noticed myself how easy it would be to resist these much-dreaded visitors. When they advance they first inquire whether there are any Franc-tireurs in the neighbourhood, and so sure as they meet with a serious resistance they decamp at full speed. In my humble opinion, this wholesale plundering could easily be stopped, and the strong measures taken in the department of the Seine-Inférieure to prevent similar depredations, have already proved efficient.

The first balloon from Paris, carrying official news from the besieged capital, descended near Evreux on the 23rd of September. The courageous aeronaut, who rendered so many eminent services to the French, is named Durnof. Amongst the excitement of a Parisian crowd, who had assembled in Paris—Montmartre—to witness the first essay, the young man was raised up into the air and left with the cheers of the people for his perilous voyage, and after few incidents arrived *à bon port*. The balloon, when passing over the Prussian troops, was repeatedly fired at, but fortunately without effect. He brought from Paris the assurance, that the Garde Nationale, the *Mobiles*, and the soldiers were full of confidence and hope, and the official news of the following sortie :—

“In the morning of the 19th, General Ducrot, who occupied with four divisions the heights from Villejuif to Meudon, marched forward, taking the offensive. He soon came in collision with important forces of the Prussians, and of their artillery, hidden

by the woods and villages. After a strong contest, his troops were compelled to retreat, a part of the right wing leaving in confusion, the other part taking its position on the redoubt of Châtillon, and the left wing maintaining its ground on the heights of Villejuif. At that moment the artillery fire of the enemy increased vigorously, and at four o'clock, after a fighting which had lasted all day, General Ducrot took the resolution to retreat under the protection of the forts.

“ The conduct of the general during the engagement has been worthy of the high reputation he has won in the army. He did not abandon the redoubt of Châtillon before seeing himself to the spiking of the eight guns defending the redoubt, and he was the last to retire under the Fort de Vanvres. The artillery and Mobiles behaved bravely, and stood gallantly. Our losses are small. The enemy has sustained more severe ones. Our batteries have fired 25,000 shots.

“ In an order of the day General Trochu blames

sider the day has been honourable for our arms. Our losses, although not exactly ascertained yet, are great, and we believe the enemy has considerably suffered." Without passing much of a commentary on this news, I shall add that it has very little appearance indeed of a success for the French.

Admiral Fourichon had relinquished the portfolio of war (*ad interim*), and M. Crémieux had been entrusted with the same; the cause of this change is to be found in a most deplorable resolution taken by the Government at Tours on the occasion of the Socialist movement at Lyons. MM. Crémieux and Glais-Bizoin signed a decree, on the pressing demand of the Comité du Salut Public of Lyons, by which the Prefect of the Rhône received full powers to take in hand all military authority, and to appoint commanders, &c. On the arrival of the decree at Lyons, the first act of the Republican prefect was to sign the arrest of General Mazure, Commander-in-Chief of that division. Admiral Fourichon had refused to give his sanction to such an extraordinary concession, or weakness, of his

colleagues. He was foreseeing, with good reason, that the example given by the city of Lyons would be soon followed by other cities; and on those conditions he could not keep in his hands any longer the War Department.

Skirmishing of slight importance continued on the different borders of the departments of the Loiret, Seine Inférieure, Oise, and Eure-et-Loire, the Franc-tireurs and Mobiles keeping their ground. Chartres was well prepared for resistance, and Orléans had done wonders since a panic, caused by the retreat of the general and the prefect, who were exchanging letters on the responsibility of the case, leaving the public to judge in the matter, and to appreciate who had been most to blame.

On the 3rd of October, a Prussian column of 3000 men occupied Epéron after a conflict, in which 150 Gardes-Mobiles were put *hors de combat*. I was on the road to Chartres, at only a few miles distant, and assisted in carrying the wounded to that town.

Chartres, the *patrie* of General Marceau, was in-

spired at that time by the warlike spirit of the great Republican general, born within its walls, and to whom had been erected a statue in its principal square. Great preparations had been made for resistance; in defence of the town 12,000 Mobiles were waiting the approach of the enemy—a numerous Garde Nationale was also in arms, and between the parading, the drilling, the beating of the drums, and the sound of the trumpets, you fancied you were in the middle of a regular *place de guerre*.

This city, capital of the Department of Eure-et-Loire, is situated at a distance of 60 English miles from Paris. It possesses several remarkable monuments; amongst them is the cathedral, one of the finest in Europe. In admiring the beautiful stained glass of that magnificent edifice, one of the *chefs-d'œuvre* of the architecture of the thirteenth century, I could not help thinking of the fate of the cathedral of Strasburg, and of the probability of the storming of the steeple of the cathedral of Chartres by the Prussian cannons, now only a few miles from the neighbourhood.

From the different movements of the German troops in small columns towards the various departments adjoining the district of Paris, it was easily understood that no serious military operations were intended for the present, outside the siege of Paris. I shall except the army which was marching on Lyons, forming apparently an important strategic threat against the south of France; the marches and counter-marches towards Beauvais, Rouen, Orléans, and Chartres, had no other object than the collecting of provisions, the levying of contributions, and reconnoitering the districts at the rear of their armies. For instance, in the department of the Loiret, the Prussian columns for requisitions were continuing their wanderings, becoming more and more exacting in their requests. At Neuville some new detachments were paying daily visits; they inquired anxiously for the whereabouts of Franc-tireurs and Mobiles. they were in great number at Putay; and at Toury (Eure-et-Loire) a corps of 10,000 men, commanded by Prince Albert, protected the centre of operations from

supplying the army of Paris. In that very town they had over 40,000 sheep, several thousand head of cattle, and any amount of provisions—products of requisitions and plunder in the plains of La Beauce. The Nationales, Franc-tireurs, and Volunteer corps keeping to sharp shooting and guerilla tactics, were seriously preventing lately the depredations of the enemy; they had now to pay at a dear cost for their booty, being constantly harassed by the French.

Around Paris the Prussians were concentrating in large numbers. At Versailles 150,000 men occupied the town and the neighbourhood; they were establishing a *camp retranché* on the plains of Satory, on the very spot where the dépôt of French artillery had been for years past, on the very same ground where so many brilliant reviews of French troops had been held by King Louis Philippe, the Duke of Orléans, and the Emperor Napoleon III.

Perhaps those works of fortifying a camp at Satory were made in the event of an army advancing on their

rear (the army of La Loire, for instance). In that case they would find it a strong defensive position, which would ensure them against the risk of being thrown under the walls of Paris, and to be taken between two fires. They could defend themselves without recrossing the Seine, in case a part of their army should be cut off from the other.

On the 7th of October, a column from the Armée de la Loire, commanded by General Regau, and principally composed of Cavalry and Mobiles, attacked Toury, the centre of operation of Prussian levies for supplies.

The Germans, well-informed of the advance of the French, had posted themselves in battle order, in positions carefully chosen in advance by their staff officers. Notwithstanding their strength, their superior artillery, and their fine cavalry, they were compelled to retreat precipitately—in fact, they were routed, after a struggle which lasted from seven a.m. till twelve.

Four partial combats took place in and around the

village; the first between the outposts and the vanguard of General Regau, a squadron of the 6th Regiment of Hussars; another between Peinville and the farm of Boissay; a third between the farm of Boissay and Toury; and the fourth between the farm of Para, Dimancheville, and Toury.

The Cuirassiers, with General de Longuerue, the Mobiles of the department of the Cher, the Chasseurs of Vincennes, behaved magnificently in the affair. A company of Turcos also distinguished themselves in dislodging the Prussians from the houses and streets of Toury.

The losses were large; they were far more considerable on the German side. It was noticed that in the very middle of the fight they immediately carried away their dead and wounded, each regiment being followed, under fire, by men with hand-barrows ready for that purpose.

Forty-seven prisoners, several of them with the military medal of Sadowa, were brought to Orléans at the same time as the French wounded; they

seemed quite happy with their fate, and to have had enough of warfare.

Toury and Pithiviers were occupied by French troops, and the expedition of General Regau, the success of that first column of the Armée de la Loire, were giving hopes for the future prospects of the forces under the command-in-chief of General De Lamotte-Rouge, which soon disappeared by a new disaster.

The engagement at Toury led momentarily to important results ; not only that place and Pithiviers, but the borders of the department of the Loire were cleared of the Prussians' presence, and the department of Eure-et-Loire had also shared the benefit won by that French victory, and all the line from Joinville to Voves, invaded for some time, was now entirely freed from enemies, as well as at Epernon and Gallon-don, on the very limits of Seine-et-Oise.

M. Gambetta, the Minister of the Interior, had arrived at Tours, from Paris, in a balloon. The arrival of the young member of the Government pro-

duced an excellent effect, and brought an element of vigour much wanted in the old patriots, his *confrères*, especially since Admiral Fourichon had retired from the War Department. MM. Cremieux and Glais-Bizoin were well appreciated for their talents and devotedness to their country. They are honest, patriotic men, full of good intentions, but they want a little of that vigour of their younger colleague, the already popular member of the new Government. It was also announced that, by a decision from the Central Government at Paris, the elections to the *Assemblée Constituante* were indefinitely postponed.

Garibaldi had also arrived at Tours, and offered his services to France; he was at once appointed *Generalissimo* of all the Volunteer corps of the East.

Knowing, since the Sunday night, 9th of October, that a large Prussian corps d'armée was advancing, *à marche forcée*, on Orléans, I immediately started for that district, and witnessed a battle, which lasted for two days, between Artenay, Chevilly, Cercottes, and Orléans.

From Artenay to Chevilly the country is open; it is the Plaine de la Beauce; the ground is level and without woods, but at Chevilly the forest of Orléans begins, and passes *viâ* Cercottes, right up to Orléans. It is on that spot that the Prussians obtained another victory against the Armée de la Loire.

After the combat of Toury, the Germans understood that a serious check, against their now well-organised columns of defence, of the French was necessary, all along the borders of the departments forming the Beauce and Gâtinais, so important for their supplies, that they could not afford to lose the resources of that fertile country.

On the other side the formation of the Armée de la Loire was giving them some apprehensions for the future, and they were resolved to put a barrier against those forces which would soon threaten their armies around Paris.

At nine, on the morning of the 10th October, a Prussian corps d'armée, 40,000 men strong, with

powerful artillery, and commanded by General Von Chance, attacked Artenay, where a brigade, commanded by General Longuerue, and four companies of Chasseurs, had been expecting the arrival of the enemy; they fought bravely. These troops were soon reinforced by General Regau, who came to their help with five regiments, four battalions, and a large battery of eight pieces of artillery. The fight was desperate, losses were great on both sides, and the conflict lasted till three o'clock P.M. The final result was the repulse of the French in the Forest of Orléans, where they expected reinforcements, and where they resolved to defend themselves.

The Gardes Mobiles of the Nièvre, and the Zouaves Pontificaux behaved heroically; for several hours they sustained their position, and entirely checked the efforts of the enemy, giving a glorious example to the regulars and cavalry, who did not follow enough the courageous resistance of the volunteers.

In the afternoon, and during the night, General de Lamotte-Rouge had brought important reinforcements,

and his army, ready to face the Prussians of General Von der Jann, numbered 35,000 men, but with weak artillery.

The engagement began early on the morning of the eleventh, and lasted nearly all day; but, owing to the occupation by the French of the Forest of Orléans, the cover of the wood was a slight compensation against the superior artillery of the Germans, and gave towards the evening a skirmishing character to the affair more than that of a battle.

The chief orders were given or issued by General de Lamotte-Rouge. The French troops were composed of several divisions of infantry and Mobs, three regiments of cavalry, two companies of Franc-tireurs, three regiments of regulars, and a column of 800 volunteers (late Zouaves Pontificaux), under the command of Captain Le Gonidec.

At eleven o'clock that morning the Prussian vanguard was in position at La Croix-Briquet, between Artenay and Chevilly, close to the railway line and the Imperial road, which pass through the vil

The other corps were placed towards Artenay, facing the borders of the forest of Orléans.

The French, advancing from Chevilly and Cercottes, took up a line to cover their retreat on the forest, and extending in the direction of Orléans. They occupied the villages of Le Vieux, Cercottes, Saran, and the Chateaux of Les Quatre-cheminées and La Vallée, nearly reaching Orléans.

The two armies were soon engaged along their whole line. The fighting was well sustained on both sides till about three o'clock, but the Prussians gained ground, their artillery approached nearer and nearer, and occupied the best positions, and their columns already menaced Cercottes.

A few hours later they were victorious, the French were dislodged from their positions, retreating on the left bank of the Loire, and later again the Prussians entered Orléans—after having taken three cannon and several prisoners. The stations of Les Aubrais and of the city were on fire. This new French defeat was owing in great part, I am sorry to say, to the dis-

organisation of the regular troops, who seem now to play the same part in every engagement. The Mobiles and Volunteers, on the contrary, fought heroically those last two days; their behaviour before the enemy and their courage was admirable; they fought like the best troops, and won in this affair a fame that will survive through all disasters. They stood fire to the last, and retreated in perfect order, terminating their exploits by a good skirmishing fire when obliged to abandon their positions.

The losses were great on both sides, especially amongst the Volunteers. The Zouaves Pontificaux were constantly in front during the fight, and unfortunately those brave young soldiers, most of them belonging to the French nobility, were slaughtered. Few of them remained to share the empty benefit of glory, the only advantage won by the French Volunteers in this last affair.

Towards the evening the conflict drew close to the city of Orléans. The shells reached the houses, and

the confusion and panic extreme. Soldiers and artillerymen crossed the Boulevards close to the railway. Their route was stopped by Mobiles, but nothing could alter their mad retreat, and the inhabitants ran in all directions, exclaiming with terror, "Les Prussiens ! Les Prussiens !" Happily, the principal columns of the corps d'armée had already retreated in good order on Laferte St. Aubin, at Olivet, on the little river Loiret.

At 7 o'clock, P.M., the Germans entered Orléans. Some shells had been thrown on the town; some plundering of the shops took place, and a requisition of several millions of francs was at once imposed by the victorious enemy.

The anguish was extreme in the city. The Municipal Council was sitting at the Hôtel de Ville, ready to take some decision; the Prefect Pereira and the bishop, Monseigneur Dupanloup, met the Germans at the Faubourg Bannier, and tried to arrange a basis for negotiations. All the works of defence which had been prepared for the last few days had

been abandoned at the approach of the Prussians, and peaceful arrangements were now the only chance for the protection of the city of Orléans from further devastation.

The Armée de la Loire had received a fatal blow; that great resource of a French army of operation was highly compromised; the losses were large and irreparable for France; the *morale* and confidence of the people were going to be destroyed again, and the speeches and decrees of the Government at Tours were of very little weight in presence of these new defeats.

General de la Motte-Rouge was relieved from his command, and replaced by General D'Aurelles de Paladine.

Before the first engagement at Artenay, it was well known at Orléans and at Tours that a Prussian corps of 40,000 men, infantry, cavalry, and artillery, was advancing from Etampes by a *marche forcée* on Orléans. French generals must also have seen since the fighting at Tours

after an experience won at such a painful cost, that the Prussian tactics are not to rest on a defeat, small and trifling as it might be, and that after a repulse or disadvantage large columns are sure to advance, and to take a decisive revenge. They cannot have forgotten Forbach, after Saarbruck, Gravelotte, after Borny, &c. But of what use is experience if the chiefs who command the brave columns are always committing the same faults, and going through the same errors? What use to have at hand an army of 80,000 men if they do not know how to employ its strength? Of what use was the Armée de la Loire, well equipped and well armed, if its divisions are called to be sacrificed, one after the other, to the superior forces of the enemy? Why did the army not advance on Orléans? Why send isolated column after column, and leave a few brigades to sustain the attack of a full corps d'armée, when the whole of the army was at hand?

The incapacity of the Government, the want of resolution, and of military science, have been the

causes of French misfortunes, and I am afraid it has not been altered for the better. M. Gambetta is now Minister of War and of the Interior, but I witnessed, on his arrival at Tours, different intrigues, which are far from giving me confidence in him for the future. I have seen men really known for their ability put aside for others entirely strangers to their new duties. The business of the Government seems to be to keep their position, to watch over their personal interests, to study their friends; to pass decrees, more or less out of season, then to postpone their execution; to appoint a man to an important office, then to break his position, and remove him a few hours after. Within four hours, I read of three different appointments for the superintendence of the War Offices, and the last one, the man appointed, was a civil engineer on a railway. Everything is done in the same style; men of value see their offers of services rejected, and petty clerks are appointed to direct the movements of the armies. All is in confusion, and the unfortunate French

people, kept ignorant of these doings, are left with the firm idea that wonders are being done, that all has been prepared, all measures taken, and that they are fully ready to take that revenge which they believe they have the power to do. I see plainly if military men, as Admiral Fourichon, do not take in hand altogether the direction of affairs, all is over for France.

From the north to the south, from the west to the east, in all the provinces, the *élite* of the nation, the finest children of France, men who represent wealth, intelligence, physical and moral strength, have risen; one million of men will be soon in arms; Bourbaki, the brave and intelligent general of Africa, the greatest hope of French generalship, is commanding in the north; Cambriels in the east, Estherazy at Lyons, D'Aurelles de Paladine on the Loire, Trochu at Paris, with an army of 600,000 men; Garibaldi, Cathelineau, Charette, Estancelin, and many other brilliant chieftains, are at the heads of free corps, marching to the enemy.

The French, taught by misfortunes without prece-

dent, are ready for all reasonable sacrifices. Their resources are ample, if directed by a competent government. Their prosperity during the Second Empire brought with it ease and luxury, and lulled to sleep, for a time, the more manly habits of the people. But sound reflection, made after so many disasters, must enable them to recover by degrees what they have now lost. France will rise again, and will resume her place amongst prosperous nations.

CHAPTER IX.

AUTHENTIC DIARY OF THE SIEGE OF STRASBOURG.

THE Siege of Strasbourg, the remarkable resistance of that fortified town, the heroism of its governor, General Uhrich, the intrepidity of its small garrison, the patriotic devotedness of its inhabitants, during a contest which began on the 12th of August, and ended on the 28th of September, amidst a storming which lasted thirty-nine days without interruption, has secured for that unfortunate city one of the most illustrious records in military annals.

At the moment when war was declared against Prussia, Strasbourg, like the other fortified towns of the north and north-east of France, was not prepared to sustain a siege. The armament, the supplies of

provisions and ammunition, were incomplete. The artillery consisted of 240 pieces of ordnance of all sizes, from the field howitzer to the battering-cannon of 24lbs.; a few mortars and 12-pounders formed the principal engines for the defence.

There were no artillery-men, as they had all been sent to the Army of the Rhine, with the exception of the 16th regiment of Pontonniers, commanded by Colonel Fievet, who had received orders to go to Metz, but ultimately remained in Strasbourg.

This regiment with the small *dépôts* of the 5th and 20th of Artillery was under the command of General Barral, and constituted the only artillery corps left in Strasbourg; and he arrived under disguise, when the town was already invested by the Germans.

The *Génie* were composed of a few guards of 1st and 2nd class, of eight men. Colonel Sabatier, Mengin, and Commandant Ducrot, belonging to the *Génie*, were also in the town.

In France, the head of the war department,

the general staff of the Emperor and of Marshal Lebœuf, were so convinced that the Prussians would not take the offensive; they were so sanguine of invading German territory, that they never thought of the possibility of seeing Strasbourg, or any other French frontier town, besieged by the enemy. Accordingly, Strasbourg was not in the least prepared to sustain a siege, when General Alexis Uhrich, newly appointed at his own request to the command of the 6th military territorial division, arrived within its walls.

General Uhrich had as chief of his staff General Gaujal, who died suddenly on his arrival, and was replaced by General Moreno.

Strasbourg had been chosen as head-quarters to the 1st corps d'armée of Marshal MacMahon; but on the 2nd of August, the Marshal left the place with his divisions scarcely organised, and took his position at Weissembourg, Woerth, Soultz, and Haguenau.

Before leaving, Marshal MacMahon apprised General Uhrich of a telegraphic despatch he had received

from the Emperor, intimating that an attack would be made by the Prussians on his corps d'armée, and that being in want of all his troops, he would leave him only a regiment of line, the 87th ; he added that Strasbourg would be sufficiently covered by his corps d'armée, but that in case he should be compelled to make for the north-west, he would send him some reinforcements.

On the 4th of August, on the departure of the Marshal, the garrison of the town was composed of the 87th of the line, of the dépôts of the 18th and 96th and of the other dépôts of the 10th and 16th battalions of Chasseurs.

The staff, under General Uhrich, was composed of Colonel Ducasse (commandant de place), the colonel of the staff, Lesieur, and Intendant Lavalette. On the evening of the same day, the news of the defeat of the division of Abel Douay at Weissembourg reached General Uhrich, and the day after, a large number of soldiers and officers, some wounded, arrived at Strasbourg, and brought the news of the

fatal battle fought by Marshal MacMahon at Woerth against the overwhelming army of the Crown Prince of Prussia.

This unexpected reinforcement was not so efficient as it appeared at first; it was composed of men either wounded or demoralized by the defeat, who had lost their arms and luggage, and their presence was not calculated to increase the confidence and spirits of the garrison.

However, General Uhrich immediately formed out of the choice of those men, a regiment of infantry and one of cavalry, and placed them under the commands of Colonel Rollet and of Commandant de Serlay.

The director of the Custom House also formed with his men a battalion of 450 douaniers; and Admiral Excelmans, with Captain Du Petit-Thouars, his aide-de-camp, who had arrived to form a flotilla, in view of the crossing of the Rhine, remained with his ninety sailors to help in defending the city.

On the 7th of August, General Uhrich assembled a council of war under his presidency, and the

resources of the place were reckoned as follows:—a garrison of 7000 men of infantry, including the sailors and douaniers, 600 men of cavalry, 1600 of artillerymen, a battalion of mobiles, and 3000 national guards, forming altogether an effective force of 15,000 men.

The barracks, fitted up with beds, could accommodate 10,000 men; the supplies consisted of bread for 180 days, provisions for 60 days, but a very small quantity of live stock. The council of war unanimously decided that resistance should be made, that the garrison should be divided into three bodies,—one third for the service of the ramparts, another third for marching, and the last one for reserve. It was also decided to put the supplies in cellars, where they would be protected against the storming; to turn out of the town all people of loose character; and to induce the aged, the women, and the children, to leave at once.

The following day the same council of war assembled on several occasions to take measures neces-

sary for the defence; new resolutions for resisting to the last were taken by the Governor and his officers.

At that time it was not yet possible to foresee the turn of events, nor to believe in such a gross and guilty ignorance on the part of a Minister of War, who had a few days previously declared before the Legislative Assembly that France was ready—thrice ready, and who had given to the nation a false statement as to the military situation. How was it possible to imagine that some of the generals of the French army would carry so far their incompetence in directing their troops or their operations?

Who could have thought that all those fatal circumstances, such as superiority in number, in armament, in discipline, in strategy and tactics, would be combined in the enemy, to crush such a country as France?

Immediately after the battle of Woerth, Strasbourg could be blocked, regularly attacked, and stormed. Such apprehension was probable, but nobody could

have believed that that important fortified town—that military arsenal, that city so valuable, politically and militarily speaking—would be left without succour.

On the 9th of August an envoy, bearing a flag of truce, approached the fortifications, and on behalf of the general commanding the besiegers, he made the usual summons to surrender. In reply, General Uhrich, from one of the windows of head-quarters showed to the Prussian messenger the Strasbourgeois crowding the streets and shouting, “Down with Prussia, Vive la France!”

Next morning the following proclamation was issued:—

“To the Inhabitants of Strasbourg.”

“Unfounded rumours and panics have been spread within the last days in our brave city; some individuals have dared to assert that the place would surrender without defending itself.

“We energetically protest, in the name of the courageous population, against that cowardly and criminal weakness.

“The ramparts are armed with 400 cannons, the garrison composed of 11,000 men and of the National Guard.

“If Strasbourg is attacked, Strasbourg will be defended so long as a soldier, a biscuit, or a cartridge is left.

“The brave can be tranquillised, the others may leave.

“GENERAL UHRICH.

“18th August, 1870.”



Marshal MacMahon's corps d'armée had retreated on Saverne, Luneville, and Châlons; the investment of Strasbourg was likely to follow the defeat of the 1st corps; the first care of General Uhrich was therefore to establish an observatory whence the movements of the enemy, the march of its columns and of its convoys, could be watched; that observatory was

formed on the platform at the top of the spire of the magnificent cathedral, but the Prussian shells soon annihilated that post of observation, and the cathedral itself had to suffer from the projectiles.

From this observatory strong Prussian columns were signalled on the 11th of August at 4 P.M. Those divisions, composed of men of all arms, were advancing from Schiltisheim on the Lauterbourg road. The enemy took up its positions on the north at a few miles from the advanced works, in the villages of Kœnigshoffen, Oberhausbergen, Mittelhausbergen, and Schiltisheim, forming a circle of three miles.

The Governor, wishing to stop any desire to surrender, made another proclamation, admirable for its energy. Over-night, in prevision of the worst, he had sent a strong force to occupy the fortified works.

Strasbourg is a fortified town of the first order, situated in the valley of the Rhine and of the Ill. It is divided into two parts, by that last river, which crosses it from the south-west to the north-

east. It is built in the middle of a fertile plain, one mile from the Rhine and from Kehl; the houses are lofty, but often heavy and inelegant. Of the streets, some are wide and straight, but the greater part are narrow; its cathedral, one of the most distinguished specimens of gothic architecture, is one of the finest in Europe—its tower of 466 feet in height is a masterpiece of architecture, built of hewn stone, cut with such a skill as to give it, at a distance, some resemblance to lace. The clock is no less a masterpiece of mechanism, being of an astronomical character. Strasbourg is a place of great antiquity, having existed prior to the Christian Era; its vicinity has been more than once the scene of military operations; its fortifications are extensive; they form a semicircle, having the shape of an isosceles triangle, having for its base the north front, which, at its eastern extremity, close to the Rhine, is defended by a fortress forming a five-angled bastion, and it was that side of the city which was chosen by the Germans for executing their principal attack.

The two fronts crossed by the river Ill can be easily inundated, and the ditches are generally full of water. The north front is, like the two others, composed of a strong system of bastions, with *lunettes* and fortified works, communicating with the fortifications by a double line of casements. Both extremities of that front are defended by two forts—the Fort des Pierres to the north, the Fort Blanche to the south. A military road runs at the foot of the ramparts.

In advancing from north to south on that front of attack, the following gates are passed :—La Porte des Pierres, leading to the Lauterbourg road ; La Porte de Saverne, on the road to Saverne ; La Porte Blanche, between the two, nearing the north. The railway from Paris, after crossing through the fortified works, has its terminus in the interior of the town, close to the cathedral. Another railway line, from Bâle to Strasbourg, crosses the first one a mile to the south of La Porte Blanche, and goes from west to east towards Kehl, and then into the Grand Duchy

of Baden. We only describe now this north front as being the point of attack. Its extent is 1,200 yards.

The siege of Strasbourg may be divided into three different parts—the first stage from the declaration of war to the investment, which we have just described; the second, from the investment to the bombardment; and the third, from the storming to the capitulation.

We shall now pass to the second section. The approach of the enemy was not only signalled from the Observatory on the 11th of August, but on the morning of the 12th the French spies brought information that the corps of General Werder, composed of many strong columns, was definitely taking up its positions in front of the works, or *lunettes*, protecting the bastions 11 and 12 on the north front.

General Uhrich, with the agreement of the Council, made the following arrangements :

The general defence of the *perimeter* of the town was divided into four districts, having for com-

manders General Moreno, Admiral Excelmans, and two colonels who were in the town. The provisional regiments were sent to occupy the fortress; the Mobiles were designed to help in the operations. The ambulances, under Intendants Brisac and Milon, of the Commissariat, were soon organised. Two students of the medical school took the direction of the medical service.

The enemy, having established its positions at the north-west, in the rear of the villages, began to send a few shells against the fortified works, and to engage a well-sustained firing of musketry, as though they were desirous of experimenting on the reach and efficiency of its shooting. Their firing was answered by the garrison. Hostilities had commenced, but it was still doubtful if the attack would be a regular siege or a blockade. The forces of the Germans were not known, and on the 19th General Uhrich, to ascertain their real strength, ordered a reconnoitering *sortie* by two squadrons of cavalry, and two companies of infantry. This reconnoitering party advanced

on the villages of Neuhauff and Alkirch, and came back without having met with any serious encounter, and having captured 100 oxen and some supplies.

On the night from the 13th to the 14th the cannonade and discharge of musketry kept the inhabitants in excitement, and gave them a sample of the events which were about to take place in their unfortunate city. At daylight the placing of a Prussian battery and of three howitzers between the lines of railway to Saverne and Bâle was signalled from the Observatory. The firing of the besiegers became stronger, and the range of their big guns, the skilful aiming of their artillerymen, was at once recognised. While the shots from the forts scarcely reached them, their firing was regularly affecting the fortified works of the town.

At three o'clock in the afternoon the general sent Moritz, the colonel of engineers, on a second reconnoitering excursion on the left bank of the Ill. That officer, with 900 men of the line, fifty of cavalry, and

two field-guns, attacked the Prussian camp, and, after a heavy fire with the enemy, retreated on the town. On the same day the general of artillery, Barral, succeeded in penetrating into Strasbourg, under the disguise of a workman.

It is a remarkable fact, that General Barral, after the capitulation, succeeded in escaping, with his daughter, from the captivity. He has now a command at Lyons. But a great misfortune has fallen on that brave general, one of the most glorious defenders of Strasbourg. His daughter, frenzied by the horrid scenes she had witnessed, is now afflicted with insanity. Great hopes are entertained for the recovery of that devoted lady, who, during the siege, was one of the kind attendants to the sick and wounded.

The following day, the 15th of August, was the *fête* of the Emperor. A *Te Deum* was sung in the Cathedral, nearly under the fire of the Germans. At 2 o'clock, the Prussian guns aimed at the front of the second district of defence, commanded by

Colonel Petitpied. In the evening the enemy approached the town. The rapidity of its fire increased. Several of the inhabitants were killed, and a conflagration ensued. As the besieged were not strong enough to oppose the Prussians, their troops not numerous enough to make successful sorties, their only chance was in defending the city under cover of the ramparts.

The immense superiority of the German artillery, the size of their ordnance, so out of proportion with the French, showed the garrison, and the inhabitants, that they had to prepare themselves for the worst.

The next day was even more disastrous than the night. General Uhrich wishing to test the enemy's designs, and to prevent the construction of new batteries, ordered another reconnoitering to be made by two battalions, two squadrons, together with a battery of artillery. The column advanced to the north-west, and encountered important forces. An engagement took place and the French were repulsed, leaving in

the hands of the Prussians three guns and a few wounded. Colonel Fievet was also dangerously wounded.

One of the field-guns was retaken by some peasants and brought back to the town.

On the 17th, masses of German troops were seen from the Cathedral, between the Paris railway and the road to Saverne; those columns, accompanied by powerful artillery, were advancing in the direction of Wolfisheim *viâ* Hansbergen. Wolfisheim is a village situated three miles from the fortified works of Strasbourg, on the little river Brûche, and it had been chosen as a point of concentration by the troops on the march. The 87th of the Line was sent to reconnoitre, and to protect 400 workmen busy in cutting the trees and clearing the ground near La Porte Blanche, in front of the second district of defence.

The soldiers of the 87th of the Line, who were commanded by their brave colonel, advanced to the village of Schiltisheim, which they found barricaded,

and well defended; after a skirmishing affair, in which they had twenty-five men killed or put *hors de combat*, they retreated, after having succeeded in their object of reconnoitering the enemy's position.

The firing of the Prussians continued without interruption on the 18th, and on the 19th the bombardment with the heavy guns began in all its earnestness.

I shall not relate now the horrors of these thirty-nine following days of suffering endured by the heroic population of Strasbourg, the brave deeds of that garrison, the energy and sublime resistance of the chiefs, the heroic defence of the fortress by the illustrious General Uhrich. So many detailed accounts have already been given in the daily newspapers, it would only be tedious to repeat the facts.

On the 27th of September, after that defence which has caused the admiration of Europe, and which will remain as one of the most mournful events in French history, General Uhrich, recognising that further

resistance was impossible, issued the following orders to the inhabitants :—

“ The Inhabitants of Strasbourg.

“ Further defence of the fortress is now impossible, and with the advice of the council of war, I am compelled to enter into negotiations with the commander-in-chief of the besiegers. Your manly endurance during those long and painful days, has given me the means of postponing the fall of your city ; the honour of the citizens, of the soldiers, remains without a stain. God be thanked for it. Thanks to you, Prefect of the Bas-Rhin, and municipal authorities, who by your energy, your activity, have been of such a valuable help to the country, to the population so cruelly tried by misfortunes. Thanks to you, officers and soldiers ; thanks to you, gentlemen of the Council of Defence, who have directed my actions, when hesitating under the weight of my responsibility.

“ Thanks to you, representatives of the Navy, who have made us forget the smallness of your number, by the greatness of your deeds. Thanks to you, children of Alsace, Mobiles, Franc-Tireurs, Volunteers, National Guards, who have given so many proofs of devotedness. Thanks also to the commissariat, and to the hospitals, to the civil and military surgeons, to those noble young men of the medical school, who have advanced under fire to succour the dying and wounded. Thanks to the public and religious authorities for their benevolent assistance. To my dying day I shall remember you with a feeling of gratitude and admiration: and for you, do remember without bitterness your old general, who would have been so happy in avoiding on your account sufferings and dangers; but who has been compelled by duty to close his heart to your private misfortunes. Let us close our eyes on our mournful situation, and let us continue to hope! This is the last consolation of the unfortunate.”

Such were the noble words of the illustrious General Urich !

The capitulation was agreed upon and signed, but the unparalleled defence of Strasbourg will never be forgotten.

CHAPTER X.

CONCLUDING REMARKS.

As a Frenchman, it is impossible to reflect upon the scenes which I have just described, to consider the wonderful changes which have occurred during so short a period, without seeking a cause for the astounding misfortunes of my wretched country. A few months ago, France held a position second to none in the world. Prosperity crowned all its undertakings; and prominent amongst nations, it rested securely upon the prestige of former years. During the Empire the accumulation of wealth had been enormous—from the highest to the lowest all had been benefited under the imperial régime. After the Crimean and Italian campaigns, the French considered them-

selves invincible, and they imagined that no other nation could stand the strength of their arms: buoyed up by the victories of former days, they boasted of the feats they were going to perform; the cries were, "*à Berlin, à Berlin,*" and there was scarcely a Frenchman to be found, who did not firmly believe that a few weeks would see the victorious French army in possession of the Prussian capital. The idea of defeat never entered into their calculations, and believing defeat to be impossible, they devoted themselves to the luxuries of life, and totally neglected that rigidity of discipline which alone can lead to success. In this sense the Empire, which gave such a prosperity to France, may have conduced to its defeat, just as the prosperity of the Roman empire ultimately led to its downfall; but there can be no doubt that the reign of Napoleon III. will ever be remembered as one in which the French nation attained a position amongst the nations of Europe which it had never before enjoyed.

It cannot be denied that the Emperor has always

been a faithful ally to England. Why he has endeavoured to gain the good wishes of this country I need not now stop to inquire. The fact, however, is, I think, recognized, and the alliance has certainly been one of the causes of prosperity to the Empire.

And at Sedan, when the French army, previous to being encircled within the powerful masses of the Germans, was fighting to effect a retreat, a way was open to them—the Belgian frontier, the territory of Belgium. The only salvation left, the only means of escaping total ruin, was to retreat into Belgium; but the Emperor, who seems to have taken such a part in the last operations, directed by the generals on that fatal day, appears to have absolutely refused to violate neutral ground, even at the cost of the honour of his army, and of the loss of his throne.

He foresaw the results of England and Belgium being engaged against him, in a war already so disastrous; and though I have reason to believe that he was urged to enter Belgian territory during the battle of Sedan, he did not hesitate in following the

policy of honour, and giving to England a last proof of the good faith he had so long kept with her.

Belgium and Luxembourg deserve the thanks of the world for their humanity towards the belligerents. England also has been very benevolent during those terrible conflicts ; the ambulances, organised in those three countries from the product of subscriptions made by the citizens, have rendered important services. Hundreds of wounded have been saved from certain death by the kind attendance of those brave foreigners, going through all dangers and privations in the middle of the battle-fields to succour the poor sufferers, and to relieve the unfortunate. It was a touching sight to see those gentlemen pursuing the admirable task they had undertaken, distributing to the victims, with words of consolation, some comfort, by means of wine and cigars, so dear to the poor soldiers.

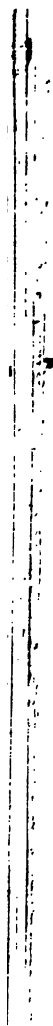
Only three months have elapsed since the Duke of Gramont announced from the tribune of the Legislative Assembly the declaration of war. The unanimous

cheers of the députés, the enthusiasm of the population, have been succeeded by an era of disasters which even now may not end for many a day. France is struggling to the bitter end, directed by incapable and weak hands; she is mourning for the glory of the past, for the loss of her most devoted children. The destruction of her armies, her territory invaded and soiled by the enemy—all these misfortunes have fallen on her; but she may not be vanquished: she may rise stronger than ever.

The powerful empire of Napoleon III. is crushed under the weight of unprecedented reverses; the monarch who mastered Russia and Austria, who raised Italy into a great kingdom, who saved his country from anarchy, and established his influence above all the sovereigns of the continent of Europe, is now a prisoner of war, forgotten in his exile by his best friends, pursued by his bitter enemies, who, putting aside all respect due to ill-fortune, accumulate on his fame insults and infamies of all kinds. The French accuse their Emperor of being the cause of their mis-

fortunes. Let us suspend a premature judgment till impartial history has pronounced its verdict, and let us respect the exile in his captivity.

THE END.



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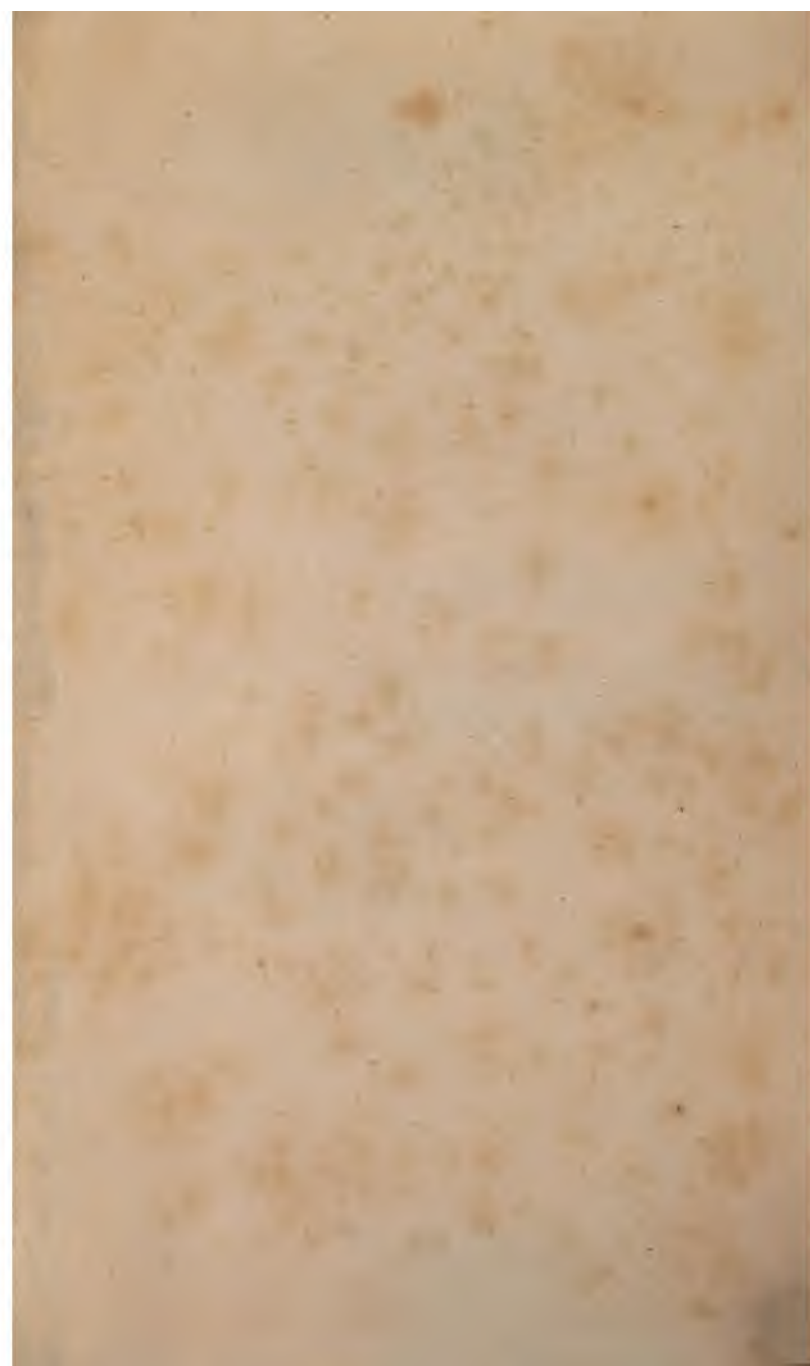
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